

Making Your Safety Message Stick!

10 powerful quotes collected over 35 years on sticky notes

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Glamour Photo



Awkward: Iowa State University Presentation



Our Common Challenge

- Successful safety programs function largely in the realm of prevention
- But conveying the value of prevention can be a very difficult task
- The right quote, used at the right time, can be a very powerful means of communicating abstract safety issues

Why Can Quotes Be So Impactful?

- **Good wordsmithing**
 - “People have an appetite for well-expressed wisdom”
- **Motivational psychology**
 - A concise message that conveys that YOU can do something, especially delivered by someone in a leadership position (leader, teacher, coach, mentor) can help establish self-efficacy
- **Self selection**
 - Not everyone is inspired by quotes
 - Some may feel that they are an oversimplification
 - But for many they can be well received because they are concise and resonate with a key point

Moran, G. “Why inspirational quotes motivate us”

<https://www.fastcompany.com/3051432/why-inspirational-quotes-motivate-us>

How Was This Information Assembled?

- Very unscientifically
- These quotes merely represent the Top 10 that struck me as being impactful during my career
- I've been able to subsequently use these quotes to make a key point regarding a particular safety issue, which resulted in some degree of success
 - (your results may vary, so proceed wisely)
- I purposefully did not catalogue the commonly used quotes in the safety business, as I felt they have been a bit overused. For example "safety first"; "safety starts here"; "don't learn safety by accident"

Full Disclosure: Absence of Attribution

- Since these quotes were accumulated in an unorganized fashion for over 35 years....
- When I scurried to write each of them down (on sticky notes), I was lucky if I remembered the quote in its entirety, much less who said it
- So I apologize to all for not having the names to attribute all of these lines to

Format

- Here's how this presentation will flow....
 - The general topical area in which the quote was used
 - The context surrounding the issue where the quote was used
 - The actual quote
- So here goes my personal Top 10, presented in no logical order.....

Quote #1

- **Topical area: Risk Management**
- **Context: Fatality while collecting wild animal species**

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Quote #1a

- Topical area: Risk Management
- Context: Fatality while collecting wild animal species
- Quote: *“When history repeats itself, the price goes up”*
- **Bonus quote – another good one from risk management:**
“Frequency breeds severity”

Quote #2

- **Topical area: Professional development training for safety staff**
- **Context: Trying to secure budget to pay for training**

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- Topical area: Professional development training for safety staff
- Context: Trying to secure budget to pay for training
- **Administrative question: “*What if we train them and they leave?*”**
- **Retort quote: “*What if we don’t and they stay?*”**

Quote #3

- **Topical area: Homeland security**
- **Context: To what degree can security steps be applied?**

Quote #3

- Topical area: Homeland security
- Context: to what degree can security steps be applied?
- **Quote: “*We don’t live in the land of the secure, we live in the land of the free”*”**

Quote #3a

- Topical area: Homeland security
- Context: to what degree can security steps be applied?
- Quote: *“We don’t live in the land of the secure, we live in the land of the free”*

- **Bonus quote - this one can be also modified to read: *“We don’t live in the land of the healthy, we live in the land of the free”***

Quote #4

- **Topical area: Customer needs**
- **Context: After 17 years, flood damaged cyclotron facility final being decommissioned, and then in comes a request for a new one**

Quote #4

- Topical area: Customer needs
- Context: After 17 years, flood damaged cyclotron facility final being decommissioned, and then comes in a request for a new one
- **Quote: “*The customer doesn’t need a ½ inch drill bit, the customer needs a ½ inch hole*”**

Quote #5

- **Topical area: Safety program benchmarking**
- **Context: Assertion being made that no two universities can be compared with any scientific certainty**

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- Context: Assertion being made that no two universities can be compared with any scientific certainty
- **Quote: “*Individuals are insolvable puzzles, but taken in aggregate become mathematic certainties*”**
 - *Sherlock Holmes*

Quote #5a

- Topical area: Safety program benchmarking
- Context: Assertion being made that no two universities can be compared with any scientific certainty
- Quote: *“Individuals are insolvable puzzles, but taken in aggregate become mathematic certainties”*
- **Bonus quote: “Comparison is the mother of insight”**

Quote #6

- **Topical area:** Achieving safety compliance in a university setting
- **Context:** Program working with disabled veterans on safety careers in universities, hospitals, and research institutions. Them not understanding why pronouncements are not heeded

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Quote #6a

- Topical area: Achieving safety compliance in a university setting
- Context: Program working with disabled veterans on safety careers in universities, hospitals and research institutions. Them not understanding why pronouncements are not heeded
- Quote out of exasperation: *“When everyone wears the same outfit, it’s a lot easier to get your own way”*
- **Bonus quote: “Emery – you don’t get it – I was told: ‘if it moves, salute it, if it doesn’t move, paint it’”**

Quote #7

- **Topical area: Security and protection of intellectual property**
- **Context: Cooperation with Federal law enforcement on training students, faculty, and staff on basic security controls especially with international collaborations**

Quote #7

- Topical area: Security and protection of intellectual property
- Context: Cooperation with Federal law enforcement on training students, faculty, and staff on basic security controls especially with international collaborations
- **Quote (from Federal Law Enforcement): *“For you guys in the audience, when you travel abroad -- you don’t magically get better looking”***

Quote #8

- **Topical area:** Dealing with a public health infectious disease outbreak (but could also apply to elevator entrapments)
- **Context:** Crafting safety messaging and policies to protect the university community

Quote #8

- Topical area: Dealing with a public health infectious disease outbreak (but could also apply to elevator entrapments)
- Context: Crafting safety messaging and policies to protect the university community
- **Quote: “People want to be treated as individuals, not as populations”**

Quote #9

- **Topical area: Emergency preparedness and response**
- **Context: Houston Chronical Op/Ed about priorities and funding for emergencies after Hurricane Harvey**

Quote #9

- Topical area: emergency preparedness and response
- Context: Houston Chronical Op/Ed about priorities and funding for emergencies after Hurricane Harvey
- **Quote: “*If Congress is serious about protecting the Homeland, they need to put down the Tom Clancy novels and turn on the Weather Channel*”**

Quote #10

- **Topical area: Compliance with safety rules**
- **Context: Faculty meeting and presentation about why we can't store stuff in the hallways**

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- Context: Faculty meeting and presentation about why we can't store stuff in the hallways
- **Quote: “*Emery – you are just being ‘procrustean’*”**
 - **???????**

Quote #10

- Topical area: compliance with safety rules
- Context: Faculty meeting and presentation about why we can't store stuff in the hallways
- Quote: *"Emery – you are just being 'procrustean'"*
- **I had to Google this one up.....**
 - **"According to Greek mythology, Procrustes was a robber who killed his victims in a most cruel and unusual way. He made them lie on an iron bed and would force them to fit the bed by cutting off the parts that hung off the ends or by stretching those people who were too short. Something *Procrustean*, therefore, takes no account of individual differences but cruelly and mercilessly makes everything the same. And a "procrustean bed" is a scheme or pattern into which someone or something is arbitrarily forced."**
 - *From: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/procrustean>*

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- **Context: These professions see the end of the pipeline**

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- Topical area: Physicians and Medical Examiners
- Context: These professions see the end of the pipeline
- Quote:
 - ***“The dead teach the living”***

The background features several sets of concentric, curved lines in the corners, some solid and some dashed, creating a modern, abstract design.

10 Honorable Mentions

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4. “We are not siloes, we are cylinders of excellence”
5. “That will be like trying to put toothpaste back in the tube”

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10. “The nail that sticks up must be driven down”

10 Honorable Mentions (plus 1)

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7. “Never get into a battle of words with an organization that buys ink by the barrel”
8. “Not everything that gets measured matters, but what matters absolutely should get measured”
9. “The thing was clear until the second person spoke”
10. “The nail that sticks up must be driven down”
11. “Its fine to be in the spotlight, but be careful because it can turn into a heat lamp”

10 Honorable Mentions (plus 2)

6. “We don’t advertise”
7. “Never get into a battle of words with an organization that buys ink by the barrel”
8. “Not everything that gets measured matters, but what matters absolutely should get measured”
9. “The thing was clear until the second person spoke”
10. “The nail that sticks up must be driven down”
11. “Its fine to be in the spotlight, but be careful because it can turn into a heat lamp”
12. “The wise parasite doesn’t kill its host”

10 Honorable Mentions (plus 3)

6. “We don’t advertise”
7. “Never get into a battle of words with an organization that buys ink by the barrel”
8. “Not everything that gets measured matters, but what matters absolutely should get measured”
9. “The thing was clear until the second person spoke”
10. “The nail that sticks up must be driven down”
11. “Its fine to be in the spotlight, but be careful because it can turn into a heat lamp”
12. “The wise parasite doesn’t kill its host”
13. “Not everyone that came before you was an idiot”

10 Honorable Mentions (plus 4)

6. “We don’t advertise”
7. “Never get into a battle of words with an organization that buys ink by the barrel”
8. “Not everything that gets measured matters, but what matters absolutely should get measured”
9. “The thing was clear until the second person spoke”
10. “The nail that sticks up must be driven down”
11. “Its fine to be in the spotlight, but be careful because it can turn into a heat lamp”
12. “The wise parasite doesn’t kill its host”
13. “Not everyone that came before you was an idiot”
14. “If you dislike change, you’re going to dislike irrelevance even more”

Summary

- The ability to effectively tell the story of prevention is a daunting task for safety professionals
- But the use of the right quote, at the right time, can be a very powerful vehicle for getting your message across!
- So stock up on sticky notes now!

Parting Quote

- As a health and safety professional...
- ***“People won’t remember what you did and won’t remember what you said, but they will remember how you made them feel”***
 - Maya Angelou

Parting Quote
#2

- ***“Nobody cares how much you know until the know how much you care”***
 - Theodore Roosevelt

Second Parting Quote

- And if nearing retirement eligibility....
- ***“You don’t want to get into a situation where you are worth more on the slab than you are on the hoof”***

Thanks!

