

Case Study.

Genesee & Wyoming Inc. (G&W)
Worldwide.
Railroad.

Getting safety on track

In 2006, safety performance of G&W subsidiaries varied widely across the company's railroads. With a collective workforce numbering 2,500 employees at the time, the railroads recorded 54 injuries. G&W was in the midst of multiple acquisitions. Expansion was an on-going focus. Yet, instead of merely concentrating on the financial and business aspects of growth, G&W leaders were concerned about the need for controlling the safety performance in an environment that was in continual flux. G&W sought advice from dss+.

dss+ identified safety issues that were the result of a dispersed workforce with a high turnover of staff. After considering a variety of consultative and skill-development approaches offered by dss+, G&W leaders hired dss+ to conduct a series of instructor-led safety leadership workshops in regional locations near G&W railroads.

"I had taken part in dss+ line supervisor workshops in my previous employment and was an advocate for them right from the start," recalls Tyrone James, Senior Vice President of Safety & Compliance. "dss+'s name is synonymous with safety. They're the gold standard on safety."



They are about accepting personal accountability, recognising one's shortcomings in safety and modeling a behaviour that we want people to emulate."

TYRONE JAMES, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF SAFETY & COMPLIANCE.

All of the senior vice presidents responsible for G&W's 10 regions took part in the first workshop with the objective of cascading the knowledge gained down to each region. James is clear: "I see tremendous value in the dss+ workshops. They are about accepting personal accountability, recognising one's shortcomings in safety and modeling a behaviour that we want people to emulate."

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William Jones manages the partnership between dss+ and G&W. He recalls meeting James and others on the leadership team for the first time. "I was immediately struck by Tyrone James' passion for safety and how much he cared about everyone who worked at G&W railroads. Safety is personal to him and his passion permeates the organisation."

Reflecting on his experience working with G&W, Jones observes "G&W is just one of those companies that really gets it when it comes to safety. G&W's focus on working safely is apparent when you talk to anyone in the organisation - from the board chairman to the railroad operator in the yards - and it is gratifying to know dss+'s longstanding partnership with G&W is an essential piece of G&W's never-ending safety journey."

The dss+ safety leadership workshops are just one part of G&W's overall safety program. G&W's program also includes Operation Lifesaver, which educates local communities on grade crossing awareness, monthly conference calls with all senior regional leaders that have safety as the first point on the agenda, internally-developed safety training classes and processes based on dss+'s safety management philosophy, to name a few. G&W railroads previously performed inspections, but now perform safety audits because, as James says, "audits focus on people while inspections focus on things." dss+'s focus on employee engagement is one of the reasons G&W felt dss+'s safety leadership workshops were a great fit for the way G&W works. The curriculum emphasises dss+'s philosophy that safety is a line management responsibility and includes a demonstration of dss+'s 6-step safety observations process, incident investigation methodology and ways participants can integrate safety rituals into their daily work practices to create a culture of safety excellence in their work environment.

"Safety is a line management responsibility. I can see the change in attitude among participants of the workshops. They are different people leaving the workshops."

JACK HELLMANN, CEO G&W

The Challenge

Integrating a variety of safety cultures & beliefs under one common safety philosophy

G&W is a company that has grown primarily by acquisition. The rapid expansion presented corporate leaders with the daunting challenge of uniting new people from different companies with different safety cultures, demographics and standards behind one common goal of uncompromising world-class safety. G&W leaders could ill-afford to introduce new employees to G&W railroads without a mechanism to quickly help them understand, work and live by G&W's approach to safety management. James concedes, "It is challenging to integrate all these new companies."

G&W decided to use safety as a rallying platform and dss+'s safety leadership workshops as a cultural integration tool to bring together diverse cultures behind a common safety philosophy. dss+'s approach was particularly important to G&W as some of the newly acquired companies did not share G&W's commitment to safety, its core values and the principle that all injuries are preventable.

G&W CEO Jack Hellmann explains the company's decision to use safety as the platform to manage the company's growth and integration in this way. "In addition to our obvious desire to see every employee return home safely to his or her loved ones at the end of every shift, people knowing that their personal well-being is the company's top priority helps create a positive work environment in which to run an outstanding business."

Echoing the CEO's sentiments, James explains, "dss+ is critical for our growth. With dss+, safety is a line management responsibility. I can see the change in attitude among participants of the workshops. They are different people leaving the workshops [compared] to the people who come in."

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G&W believes safety is an investment in people because safety is about people

G&W runs an average of 10 workshops a year with each workshop accommodating up to 25 participants. The workshops rotate through hub cities such as Montreal, Atlanta, San Diego, Rotterdam in the Netherlands, London in the UK and Newcastle, just north of Sydney in Australia.

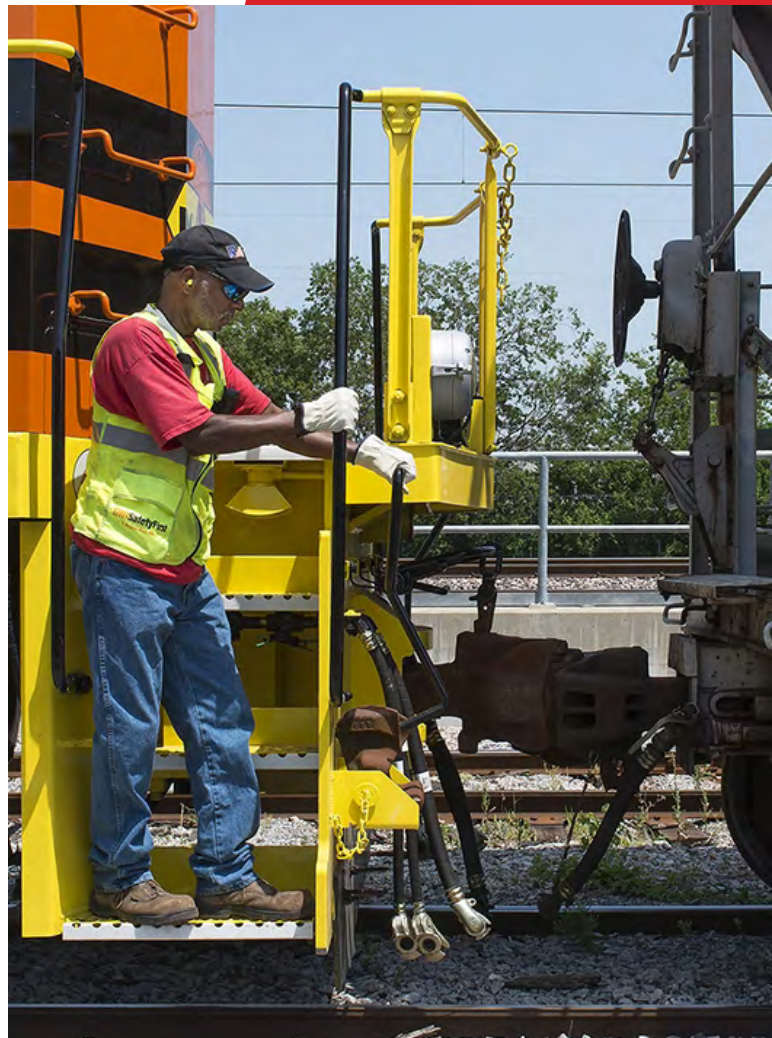
"The workshops are an investment made in you as a person," James explains. "Safety is not just the job of the safety manager. You're there every day. You become the standard. You have to live by example."

G&W's slogan is 'It Starts with Me'. G&W railroads emphasise this critical point by selecting the workshop participants from every corner of the organisation including administrative staff, vendors, contractors, customers and executive board members. By mid 2016, 1,342 employees at every level of the organisation had participated in approximately 60 safety leadership workshops.

Remarkably, the indefatigable James attends nearly every workshop around the world. When asked why he maintains such a grueling travel schedule, he explained that from his perspective there is no better way to visibly demonstrate G&W's commitment to safe operations and its investment in the people at G&W railroads.

James' active participation is the embodiment of dss+'s foundational principle for visible leadership, but one of many ways G&W demonstrates its commitment to safety.

At least eighty-five employees of G&W railroads, as well as the CEO, have repeated the course. "My number-one responsibility as CEO is the safety of our employees," explains Hellmann. "... and G&W's core purpose is to be the safest and most respected rail service provider in the world. My attendance at the workshops helps demonstrate that those aren't just words on a page. The workshops haven't changed the message, but they



Without question, we have found that the attention to detail required to eliminate injuries translates to every aspect of operations, resulting in not only injury-free railroads but also efficient, well-run railroads with high customer satisfaction."

JACK HELLMANN, CEO G&W

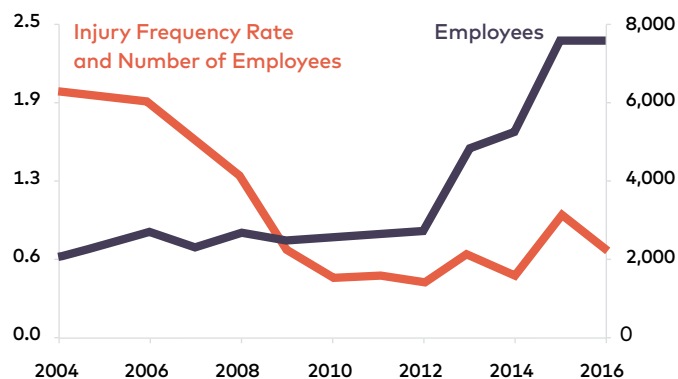
reinforce that it's every employee's responsibility – and that includes me – to eliminate unsafe behaviours and unsafe conditions from the workplace. The workshops instill both the belief that all injuries are preventable and a methodology for their prevention, which attendees bring back to their railroads."

James points out that he likes to make sure employees attend the workshop every three years to keep safety fresh in their minds, and reinforce the fact that safety is a core value, and not just "flavor of the month".

The Proof is in the Results:

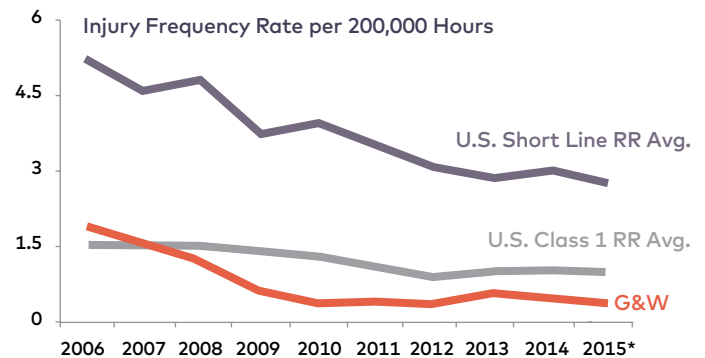
Headcount grew 300%, injuries fell by 70%.

Given the number of acquisitions, the increase in employee numbers from 2,500 to 7,500 and the vast increase in geographical spread of G&W operations, one could be forgiven for thinking that maintaining safety performance at 2006 levels would be quite an achievement. Yet as Jack Hellmann says, "Since G&W began the dss+ workshops in 2007, the combined injury-frequency rate per 200,000 hours for our railroads had by April 2015 improved by 70%, from 1.67 to 0.51¹, even as the number of employees more than doubled through new acquisitions. That's more than five times safer than the average U.S. short line railroad. The workshops are a key aspect of the G&W safety culture that produces that industry-leading performance."



G&W Injury Frequency Rate and Number of Employees

The figures also compare very favorably with the U.S. Rail Industry's Safety Performance for Class 1 Railroads' average of 1 IFR per 200,000 man hours. And in 2016, G&W is on track for year-over-year safety performance improvements with further reductions in the injury rate.



Safety Culture 2006 - 2015

G&W's safety performance has not gone unnoticed. In fact, the company is realising a competitive advantage with customers and the G&W brand being associated with safety excellence. G&W's safety performance has been recognised with numerous awards including the Jake Award with Distinction in 2015, presented to 75 G&W railroads for completing the year with a perfect safety record. James himself was named American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) Safety Professional of the Year in 2012.

Hellmann sees the impact and value from the dss+ workshops in other parts of the business as well. His perspective is that the concepts covered in the workshop have helped drive performance improvements in productivity, down-time, general employee commitment and motivation.

"Without question, we have found that the attention to detail required to eliminate injuries translates to every aspect of operations, resulting in not only injury-free railroads but also efficient, well-run railroads with high customer satisfaction," he says.

¹ IFR improvement rate 2007 to April 2015. Current IFR rate improvement in 2016, including Freightliner acquisition in April 2015, is 59% from 1.67 to 0.7.

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The Safety Journey never ends

In 2015, G&W acquired the Freightliner Group (FG), a leading rail freight provider with businesses in the United Kingdom, continental Europe, Australia and the Middle East. FG employs approximately 2,500 people. G&W quickly introduced FG to the dss+ workshops as part of the established integration process. To date, FG has participated in an estimated 12 safety leadership workshops in the UK, Australia and Poland with many more courses being scheduled for sites in The Netherlands, Italy and Germany. Since dss+'s is a global company, it has the advantage of providing G&W with instructors who are fluent in the local language and familiar with the cultural norms. FG is already seeing the results. Initial lagging indicators show an uptick in safety performance from rapidly decreasing injury frequency rates.

James is planning to continue the dss+ workshops for at least another year before exploring the next level of dss+ offerings to further advance G&W's safety culture. "They [the workshops] help our new employees understand our culture and improve theirs," he says.

G&W's vision is to be an injury-free company. In partnership with dss+, G&W is on the right track towards setting the gold standard for safety performance in the railroad industry.

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G&W is North America's largest owner of short line and regional freight railroads, running a business with US\$2 billion in revenues with 121 railroads in North America, Australia, the UK and continental Europe. G&W has grown largely through acquisitions. Since 1985, the company has made 38 acquisitions including the 2012 acquisition of Rail America, previously G&W's main competitor, which instantly doubled G&W's headcount. Today, G&W subsidiaries employ 7,500 people who serve more than 2,800 customers across 17,500 miles of track.



Assignment

Conduct a series of instructor-led safety leadership workshops



Offering

6-step safety observations process, incident investigation methodology and ways participants can integrate safety rituals into their daily work practices to create a culture of safety excellence in their work environment.



Impact

- A 70% improvement in the combined injury-frequency rate per 200,000 hours since 2007
- ... while increasing the workforce from 2,500 to 7,500 people
- More than 5 times safer than the average US short line railroad
- A safety performance that is approximately two times better than the Class 1 average

dss+

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