

2017 Gold Quill Awards
Communication Management Divisions Work Plan

Entrant: Elsabe Coetzee	Division1/Category: Communications Management Category 5: Safety communication
Organisation: Sappi SA Ltd	Time period: 01 October 2016 – 30 September 2017
Entry title: Stop and Think Before you Act	Entrant's role: Project Communication Strategy Leader
Your team members name: Caren Venter	
PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Stop and Think Before you Act (STA) is part of Sappi Forests' (SF) Risk Tolerance Mitigation strategy, aimed at achieving Sappi's safety goal: Twice as safe by 2020. STA is a 4-year initiative, which improves safety and eliminates fatalities in SF and its contractor businesses. STA provides employees with a tool (process) that guides them to safe decisions and behaviour. Safety improved since implementing STA on 01 October '16. Fatalities dropped from three to one. The Accident Injury Frequency Rate (AIFR) reduced from 4.9 to 4.72. Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate (LTIFR) decreased from 0.25 to 0.23. Lost Time Injury Severity Rate (LTISR) decreased from 135.77 to 47.94 and the Injury Index (II) decreased from 33.47 to 10.88 by 30/09/17. STA was implemented across all disciplines (Safety, Production, Environment, Quality, and Social), but the key focus was on Safety.	

1. THE BUSINESS NEED

Sappi Forests (SF) owns and manages 388,000 hectares of land in two regions (Mpumalanga (MPU) and KwaZulu-Natal (KZN)) in South Africa. The plantations are widespread and rural. SF has 860 employees, and its operations are almost 90% outsourced to 76 private contractors, who employ almost 10,000 people (including subcontractors). Forestry work is demanding with extended hours in harsh outdoor conditions where safety hazards are ever-present. SF contractors' safety performance forms part of Sappi's safety statistics. The company holds them to the same standard as SF employees. SF has an unfortunate history of fatalities in the workplace. They implemented various initiatives to improve safety performance with relative success from 2012 to 2014. From 2015 to 2016, the number of fatalities increased from zero to six, and safety deteriorated to an unacceptable level - injuries and fatalities occurred mainly in the contractor operations. From a human perspective, the safety performance was unacceptable, and SF had failed to achieve its safety sustainability goal. The impact on business was loss of reputation (goodwill and trust), financial loss (hiring cost of replacements, material damage, loss in production, investigation costs and investment in preventative activities) which resulted in a strained relationship between Sappi and its contractors

SF appointed two leading international forestry safety experts (Forme Consulting Group and Metsä Group) to assess safety management in SF and contractor businesses and DevCom did an operational communication assessment to determine the impact of communication on safety. The STA Communications Team conducted research amongst the contractors. They also engaged SF employees, to unpack safety and communication issues that were flagged in the 2016 Employee Engagement Survey. Primary research included surveys, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and group discussions, and qualitative data from meetings.

The research findings substantiated the need for change and informed the way forward. It found safety communication to be poor, affecting safety performance. As a result, Sappi become more prescriptive and decisions and processes were forced down without consultation. Contractors felt they were losing autonomy in their businesses and that they were always in the firing line. The stressed relationship between Sappi and contractors affected behaviour towards safety. For safety to improve, SF had to replace its rules-based management culture with a safety culture as the status quo left little room for creativity and innovation. Rules had replaced trust as employees were drilled in rules, resulting in a problematic attitude towards safety; hence, people were accepting risks without thinking about the consequences for themselves, others and the business. Diverse demographics, multiple languages spoken in the business and psychographic barriers compounded the problem.

The communications environment was unsettled. Contractor operations comprise diverse ethnic cultures. Illiteracy is high amongst labour and employees who are not proficient in English were expected to read lengthy complex safety policies and work procedures, which they had to communicate to labour. The communication chain from SF to contractor staff was complex and sifting of information was a problem. This resulted in trust issues - most people said they did not trust each other or the information they received and they doubted the decisions made. Communication was unclear because management and safety leaders were using confusing language. Communication channels were not suitable for the audiences. The communication tone of voice was angry and perceived as disrespectful. Recognition was lacking.

Following feedback on the research, the board instructed SF to improve safety by implementing the STA behaviour change model and a complex Hazard Identification Risk Assessment and Risk Tolerance Thinking Tree (HIRAC). SF and its contractors did not have communication staff in their business, and Sappi's Regional Communications Manager (RCM) was tasked to develop and implement a communication strategy and tactical plan for the implementation of the STA initiative to change behaviour, so that SF could achieve Sappi's safety goal of being Twice As Safe by 2020. The STA initiative succeeded in its goal of helping the organisation by improving safety, communication and relationships.

2. STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

*Refer STA Research and Stakeholder Analysis WS01, p10-14

Stakeholders were analysed and prioritised to identify according to *influence and impact on STA. DevCom's research provided valuable audience information (aforementioned). Our own research engaged the diverse group of internal and external stakeholders across all disciplines, gender, language and rank to answer questions we had about the audiences. We used a stratified sampling method - a few participants from each stakeholder group were regarded as representative of their stakeholder group. Our research confirmed that the stakeholders were diverse. About 70% were Zulu and approximately 20% were Siswati, also speaking four dialects of Siswati, depending on the area. The remainder of the audiences spoke one of seven other local languages. SF and contractor management spoke English at work, but the minority of labourers spoke some English. Ethnic cultures differed from one area to the next. For example, the Zulus in southern KZN were more conservative and traditionalist than those in the Midlands. Those in the North of KZN and Piet Retief were more unionised, suspicious, and sceptical of STA than others. In SF, the organisational culture and management style differed in the two regions and was a challenge. The STA implementation strategy and tactics considered all the stakeholder dynamics and audience appropriate communication, media and channels were developed to span the aforementioned barriers, including communication patterns and preferences, as well as matters of the heart.

Primary audiences:

a) SF operational team: This includes General Managers, Area Managers, Forestry Managers, Management Foresters, Foresters and Safety Managers. They are professionally qualified and are the link between SF and the contractors. They comprise about 26% of SF and carry the emotional and professional burden of the poor safety record. They work long hours in isolated rural areas, and the contractors are often the only external people they interact with on a daily basis. The fatalities and injuries profoundly affected them. As safety deteriorated, SF top management increased written policies and the operational employees felt responsible and pressurised to change the situation. They felt that management made decisions without understanding the practical consequences. Most of them did not like external interference and many were initially resistant and sceptical of STA. We involved them in all the contractor and labour consultation and many became supportive as results became tangible in their operations.

b) 76 Contract owners (about a quarter are upcoming contractors in various stages of development): Many of them contract for multiple organisations whose safety processes and policies differ vastly from SF’s. The contractors complained that SF’s safety systems and procedures were unusually cumbersome and that SF’ safety policies were excessive. They said that production targets set by SF conflicted with safety targets. They were unhappy with how SF reacted to safety incidents and Sappi’s blanket approach. Field-testing of STA material and contractor consultation sessions took up valuable production time, and we had to convince them that the project was not just another gimmick for which they would have to pay. They were suspicious and sceptical of SF, of us and of STA. We had to deal with many complaints and historical grievances and gain their trust before it was possible to engage them on STA effectively. We had to convince them of SF’s commitment to improving communication, trust and relationships. It took 17 consultation sessions with over 80 contractors and managers to gain their understanding and cooperation. We needed their support and an undertaking to implement STA.

c) Contractor people managers, known as safety leaders (supervisors, Safety, Health and Environmental representatives, trainers and clerks). They are the link with the shop floor and are responsible for the safety communication and training of almost 10,000-contractor labour. They make up about 5% of the contractor work force. Only about 5% of them had prior training on communication and or presentation skills. Approximately 85% of them speak an indigenous language (majority Zulu). Most of them are functionally illiterate in English, but the majority have basic reading and writing skills in their home language. Some of them do not speak the language of their target audience and make use of a translator or hand gestures to communicate. SF’ policies and safe work procedures were highly academic and lengthy English (and sometimes Zulu) documents, which the vast majority of them did not understand, unless it was translated and explained to them. We replaced their written safety material with picture stories and symbols. Because they are the link with the workers in the forest, their communication, and presentation skills was improved. They craved recognition and positive affirmation. They needed to understand STA and implement it at shop floor level. They embraced their new position of trust and empowerment. They showed a high adoption of STA and their enthusiasm for it played a significant part in the audiences’ acceptance of STA. They expressed appreciation for Sappi’s efforts to improve communication. Their enthusiasm was infectious and spilled over to labour, relationships showed an immediate improvement.

d) 10,349 Labourers (SF and Contractors): Forestry work requires physicality, and often involves heavy equipment and long hours, resulting in high staff turnover. Approximately 60% of labour is male, and most speak Zulu. About 15% speak limited English (mainly younger females under 30), and most are illiterate. Family and their children’s education is most important to this group. They do not understand the relevance or impact of strategy on them. They rely on the safety leaders and management for information, but they did not trust the messages they were given. Their behaviour is influenced by their cultural beliefs. They crave acknowledgement and showed a high affinity for the STA hero figure (Clever Me). They feared the SF managers and saw them as disciplinarians. Management underestimated their humour, love for storytelling and understanding of symbolism. Most have cell phones (about 10% smartphones). About 5% are on Facebook, and family members use Facebook. Approximately 25% use WhatsApp. They preferred face-to-face communication.

d) Secondary audiences: Sappi Limited Board of Directors and SF Executive Management (in Phase 1 they were primary audiences as they were decision makers). SF and contractor support staff and external training providers (they are at low risk of safety incidents).

e) Tertiary audiences: Includes ad hoc suppliers who interphase with the business; customers (they are mainly off-site), visitors to the plantations, and employees’ family and friends (they are not directly exposed to the operational and safety risks), Sappi SA.

3. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: Target		→	MEASURED AND EVALUATED (Ref WS 05)
Output objective: Improve safety. REDUCE: fatalities to below 3, AIFR from 4.9 to below 4.77, LTIFR from 0.25 to below 0.24, LTISR from 135.77 to below 52.21 and II from 33.47 to below 12.58 by 30/09/17.			Targets exceeded. Fatalities dropped to 1. AIFR reduced to 4.72. LTIFR decreased to 0.23. LTISR decreased to 47.94 and the II decreased to 10.88 by 30 September 2017.
Output objective: Increase knowledge of STA by training one safety leader in all 76-contractor companies on STA and motivate them to train 5,000 labour (almost 50%) to lower risk tolerance, to improve safety by 30/09/17			486 Contractor employees representing all 76 contractor companies were trained in Train the Trainer sessions, up skilling them in communication and facilitation. They trained almost 10,000 people in STA (almost 100%). Qualitative reviewing in class, of their knowledge and ability to present to others, showed a high adoption and capability, and their knowledge of STA increased.
Outtake objective: Improve relationships with contractors and their labour through consultation, to achieve support for the STA initiative, thereby increasing stakeholder engagement with the behavioural change process, resulting in improved safety by 30/09/17.			We conducted 41 consultation sessions engaging 576 contractors and their labour and involved 80 SF’ operational employees. Research indicates an improvement in relationship, as well as safety by 31/09/17. This is the first safety initiative Sappi has implemented in years that 100% of contractors actively participated in and which operational budget paid for.
Outtake objective: Increase understanding of STA by improving and simplifying safety communication, messages and material, resulting in more people understanding and			A new approach to communication, including audience specific STA material was implemented and almost 100% of the audiences (just under 11,000 people) were trained to apply the STA behaviour process.

applying the STA process to reduce at-risk behaviour by 31/09/17.	Research shows a high adoption of STA which reduced at risk behaviour, as indicated by the safety statistics.
Goal: Improve communication in SF and convince employees that communication is important.	Research indicates that communication in SF improved from 60% in January, to 86% in June. 100% of contractors said that communication improved through Sappi's efforts, and 87% of contractor businesses benefitted from it.
Goal: Implement STA as a behaviour change tool in SF contractor operations, to help achieve SF' Twice as safe by 2020 safety goal.	Research indicated that behaviour has changed.

4. THE SOLUTION OVERVIEW

To deliver on the goals and objectives outlined above, we **developed a robust communication strategy** that united the primary audiences in a common goal, namely that of improving safety. To this end, we followed a three-pronged approach. Firstly, we engaged the audience in developing **a new approach to communication that transcended barriers** such as illiteracy, language diversity, culture and gender. Secondly, we **empowered them** by providing them with a risk mitigation tool (a process in effect) to guide them to safe behaviour. This tool instructs one to “Stop and Think before you Act”. To ask yourself, if I do this, what could go wrong? If something goes wrong, how bad could it be? What could I do about it? Thirdly, **we gave them clarity of purpose** by assigning roles and responsibilities to each stakeholder group. It was the first step in SF's journey of engaging the minds, hearts and hands of its extended work family to a complete change in culture.

PHASE 1: Planning, testing and compiling strategy. We consulted the primary audiences and tested various communication approaches, tools and channels on the shop floor and in the boardroom, **to determine the most efficient way to engage each audience**. We also used this phase to develop and test a diverse range of critical messages, which had to be compelling, speak directly to our goals and objectives and have meaning to stakeholders. We used specifics to bring the messages to life. For example, we explained what the audience had to think about in “Stop and Think Before you Act”; our messages delivered the narrative and focused our communication. We captured Phase 1 activities and produced two short videos, to give feedback and prove our findings. We provided the prepared information packs containing the videos and the communications material, which the SF VP used to brief the Sappi Ltd board. Our approach was effective. The board approved the project, and they liked the video stories that we produced. They requested that for all STA briefings to be presented to them in this manner in future.

PHASE 2: We segmented the primary audience. To gain their support, we explained the “what”, the “why” and the “how”. (1) We equipped them on communication and facilitation, (2) developed their knowledge, and (3) motivated them to train others.

Group 1: The SF' operational team's role was that of STA coach and supporter. They needed to be seen to be leading by example in the new way of communication and in practising STA. They had to be mindful of their role of supporter, and not the owner of safety and or communication in the contractors' operations, thereby showing trust and restoring relationships. We hosted coaching and alignment workshops for them to help guide them in their new role. In addition to participating in all the contractor consultation sessions, they also joined in the Train the Trainer workshops to up skill themselves in communication and facilitation skills, and to learn the STA process.

Group 2: The contract owners –They needed to “own” STA and had to take the lead on establishing the new way of communicating. They had to support their safety leaders in implementing STA and include recognition and affirmation in their approach. They participated in the Train the Trainer Workshops with SF' operational team and their safety leaders. They received toolkits with all the project material (toolbox talks, posters, fact sheets etc.) in hard copy and in electronic format so that they could incorporate the STA symbol in their operational safety material.

Group 3: The contractors' safety leaders were the STA change agents on the shop floor. We followed a process of reflective learning to up skill them. They also attended the Train the Trainer workshops and were up skilled in communication, facilitation and STA knowledge. They received a certificate of proficiency upon completing the workshop, and the training was recorded as part of their professional development.

Group 4: Labour needed to understand and implement STA. The safety leaders taught them the meaning of STA and taught them the STA process through rhyming. They were shown how to apply STA to their various daily tasks, and in the event of a near miss incident, they were involved in a team debriefing to discuss the incident concerning STA. They had fun with STA at Sappi's Global Safety Week Celebrations.

Engaging the audience through storytelling: Our new approach to communication and developing material spanned all the issues mentioned in this report. Research showed that the audience loved stories and we adopted a storytelling approach. Pictures made the STA concepts easier to understand and quicker to facilitate. It engaged the right side of their brain, which elicited an emotional response to the material. It increased engagement and improved uptake and recall. Research showed that symbolism and similes would work well with the audiences. We wrote the STA process into a story to explain the thinking process. We introduced a hero and a villain character, which was used to juxtapose STA against non-compliance. The audiences named the hero character Clever Me and they showed a high affinity to Clever Me. They named the villain “Stupid Me” and he was the one who did not stop and think. He was killed on the job and his family suffered the consequences. The story engages the audience on how we all have the power to choose our destiny. We were concerned about using the word stupid to describe a person, as we felt it was disrespectful. Research showed us that we were mainly wrong as only about half of one small sub-group team objected to the name. Their material was adopted to reflect the name they gave the villain (“Irresponsible Me”).

We introduced a generic symbol to represent hazard throughout the business. Labour considered many symbols but chose the black mamba. The mamba proved to be a compelling image, which always elicited a dramatic response from audiences. The use of a standard set of symbols throughout all safety communication created a universal language that was consistent. We catered for colour-blind stakeholders by using symbols on the characters' hard hats. People learnt the meaning of each symbol and could immediately identify the characters and associate them with correct and incorrect behaviour. Contractors and SF incorporated STA symbols in their operational safety communication, eg. SHEQ alerts. We translated complex processes such as the HIRAC Thinking Tree and SF's written work processes into picture stories. High visibility of STA symbols served as triggers for people to apply STA throughout their workday. The audience connected exceptionally well with the

material, understood, and accepted that behaviour is your own choice and research indicated that some also implemented STA at home. We use the symbols and characters as a generic approach to developing all STA material and older existing material is being reworked.

Key Messages: **a.** Hazards can injure or kill you. They are like a snake. They are always there and if you don't look for them, you will not see them. **b.** Stop and Think Before you Act. **c.** Think about the hazard. What can go wrong? How bad can it be? What can I do about this? **d.** Make it safe or walk away from the hazard. **e.** My behaviour is my choice and I choose to be Clever Me. **f.** We will be twice as safe by 2020. **g.** We will improve communication by keeping it simple and to the point. **h.** We will improve relationships by consulting and collaborating with our stakeholders. (Ref. STA Solution Overview Work Sample 02, p 7 & 9).

Executive summary of the tactical plan October'16-January'17		Ref. STA Solutions and Implementation, WS 02, p11 & 12		
Activity	Audience	Key message(s)	Objective	Date
Phase 1: Strategy, board approval, establish STA lead team, own research - Consult, field test material, evidence videos (Refer to WS 02, pP11)	Sappi Ltd Board, SF VP, SF / Sappi SA, contractors, labour	f, g, h f, g, h f, g, h	Get board approval, finalise baseline research in MPU and KZN. Produce two videos.	Oct'16 to Jan'17
SF VP Communication how-to video Surveys	Sappi Ltd Board SF / Sappi SA contractors, labour	a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h	Provide feedback to board, align stakeholders, Implement one survey.	Jan'17
Announce Twice as safe by 2020	Sappi Ltd Board, Sappi SA, SF, labour and contractors	b, c, d, e, f, g, h	Inform, impart knowledge, and call to action to SF and 76 contractor companies.	Feb'17
Consultation: meetings and workshops	STA Lead team, contractors and SF Operational team	f, g, h	Improve relationships through consultation KZN and MPU.	Feb to Mar'17
Train the Trainer Workshops Weekly articles in internal newsletters Surveys	STA Lead team, Contractors, labour SF Operational team	a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h	Align audiences, measure knowledge, up skill, improve relationships, Empower and motivate.	Feb to Sept'17
Implement Clever Mina STA material Produce progress video	Sappi Ltd Board SF, Contractors, Labour	a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h,	Align audiences, educate, Call to action, empower, measure, motivate.	Apr to Aug'17
GSAW – having fun with safety	SF, Contractors, Labour	a,b,c,d,e,f,h	Unite in a common goal, build relationships, display knowledge.	June'17
Implement STA on social media	SF employees and contractors, including secondary audiences	a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h	Involve SF and Contractors.	Aug'17

5. IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES

The creative team comprised the RCM responsible for communication strategy, and a graphic design contractor employed part time to manage the creative and project CI. We established a project lead team and assigned roles and responsibilities to the members. The SF Risk Manager was the point person for forestry. He was our safety subject matter expert and it was his responsibility to keep the SF management, and VP informed and on board. Our team included SF Risk and Safety Managers from KZN. We overcame conflict in the team by training our forestry colleagues on communication and CI, and standardizing implementation across both provinces. We consulted a clinical psychiatrist, experienced in forestry, who guided us on cognitive integration, behaviour change, and cornerstone habits. Sappi's Regional Learning and Development Manager was consulted as expert on training. The creative team compiled the strategy and all presentations required by the SF VP for board approval, and the quarterly progress presentations to stakeholders.

Sustained stakeholder engagement and collaboration resolved contractor and forester cynicism about STA as a new "gimmick". Management did not understand labour's comprehension of symbols and simile. We overcame their resistance by exposing them to evidence from field-testing. Contractors tried to hijack initial consultation workshops to resolve historical issues and we had to deal with the situation before they would buy in. They complained that SF staff were not leading by example; we resolved the problem by putting SF employees through a change management process. Our printers could not cope with the capacity and delayed implementation. We changed suppliers and resolve the issue by fast forwarding delivery of other resources. Finding skilled translators to translate material into local vernacular was a challenge and we finally appointed local language teachers to help us. We saved money by scripting and producing videos in-house. **BUDGET: The project was executed within budget** at R1, 2 million (R109 pp). Budget allocation: workshop catering 16%, printing 31%, contractor fees 53% (creative and 2 surveys). Clients paid for promotional items from their operational budgets. Travel and accommodation costs were covered by individual cost centres and we paired travel with normal work so could save on travel cost.

6. MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION (Results are on page 2, paired with Goals and Objective)

SF had achieved its safety target, indicating that the company also improved reputation and curbed financial losses. Communication and relationships have also improved. The company and its stakeholders are well on their way to achieving their Twice as Safe by 2020 goal.

"In my 14 years of operational management I have never seen an initiative take traction with the contract owners, managers and their staff like STA. At all levels, there is enthusiasm for the simplicity of the message. It is so rewarding to hear contractors talk about their operators and supervisors in their business identifying and mitigating risks in their operations. No short cuts. Practicing what is preached." Leander Jarvel, GM Forestry KZN