



# Why I Stay Safe

Employer Toolkit

By Mike Thompson

# Why I Stay Safe

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“People don’t buy what you do, they buy why you do it.” – Simon Sinek

## Overview

Inspired by Simon Sinek’s popular Ted Talk, [How Great Leaders Inspire Action](#) (which has been viewed over 46 million times at the time of this writing), we wanted to find out why our members stay safe.

On July 31, 2019, we emailed our members a quick survey asking them to share with us their primary motivation for staying safe at work. Our survey found that most people are primarily motivated to work safe due to social, relational and personal factors which in most cases, have nothing to do with work!

The results may or may not be surprising but are definitely eye opening, especially when comparing & contrasting to common safety leadership, culture and communication strategies that may be missing the mark in regards to effectiveness.

The *Why I Stay Safe Campaign* is aimed at helping employers to better connect their safety message to their employees by making it more personal. The campaign also provides key insight and campaign resources that make implementing such a campaign simple and easy to do!

This Employer Toolkit will:

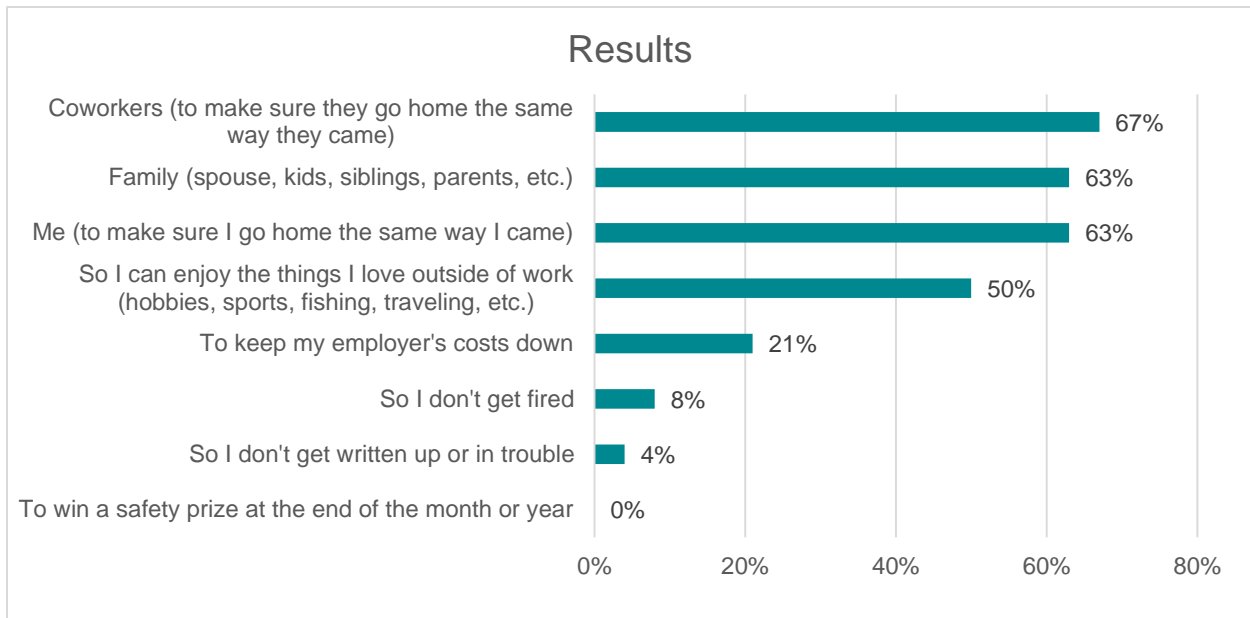
1. Review the results of the survey and list key takeaways.
2. Briefly discuss alternative or less common approaches to safety leadership & communications.
3. Identify 6 simple ways employers can start a *Why I Stay Safe* campaign at their workplace.
4. Provide links to free campaign posters & graphics that help kick start a campaign.

**To learn more...** check out [Episode 115](#) of the Portage County Safety Council Podcast! Nicholas Coia & Mike Thompson chat about the results of the survey that led to the launch of the Portage County Safety Council’s new *Why I Stay Safe Campaign*! Listen today on [iTunes](#), [Spotify](#), [Google Play](#), [Podbean](#) or [Stitcher](#)!

# Part 1: Survey Review

## Primary Motivation

What is your primary motivation for staying safe at work? (Check all that apply)

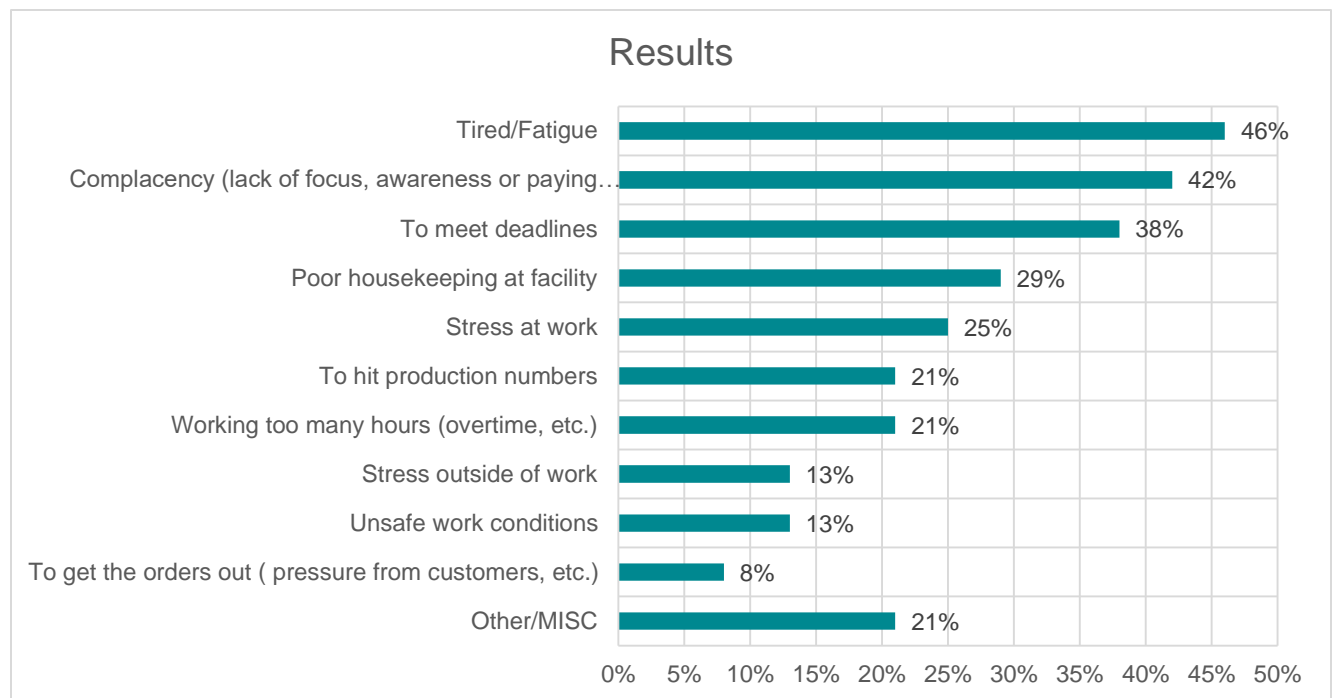


### Key Takeaways:

1. People Centered: Most people are primarily motivated to work safe due to social, relational and personal factors, much of which may not even involve work (exception would be coworkers).
2. Disciplinary Action: Very few people are primarily motivated to work safe due to threats of disciplinary action, including termination.
3. Contests & Prizes: Opportunities to win a prize for an improved safety performance was not even considered a primary motivation to work safe.
4. Communications: Employers may more effectively motivate and connect their employees to their safety message by utilizing more social, relational and personal related themes rather than disciplinary threats and employer focused incentives such as reducing injury related costs, etc.

# Factors Causing Pressure to Work Unsafely

When you are tempted or feel pressured to work unsafe, what are some factors that cause that temptation or pressure? (Check all that apply)



## Key Takeaways:

1. **Fatigue**: Whether caused by strenuous work schedules or an unbalanced personal life, fatigue significantly increases the risks of workplace injuries. With nearly half saying it's an issue, our survey shows that our members thought tiredness or fatigue was the number one factor in regards to unsafe work practices. We should note, however, that just under half that amount cited working too many hours (overtime, etc.) indicating there's more to worker fatigue than just strenuous schedules (although they do play a significant role). Practical measures such as reducing noise exposure and using anti-fatigue mats may help reduce related risks. Employers may also want to consider providing information, training or wellness programs that promote self-care and balanced lifestyles in order to reduce worker fatigue.
2. **Complacency**: More than 2 out of 5 (42%) of our members listed complacency as a significant issue! Employers may want to consider

including topics on complacency, situational awareness, increased focus and how to avoid distractions, to their toolbox talks and safety training. Safety managers can use real life anecdotes such as near misses to not only collect needed data, but also as a reminder to avoid complacent work practices that can open the door to potential injuries. Cross-training and job rotation may also help reduce the risks associated with complacency.

3. Pressure/Rushing: Whether it's due to attempting to meet deadlines (38%), hit production numbers (21%) or simply to get the orders out on time (8%), pressure can cause workers to rush, making them more susceptible to injuries. One member responded that they're tempted to "cut corners to be done quickly." Employees should be encouraged to slow down and take the extra few minutes to make sure they're not only achieving goals but achieving them safely. If employers notice a pattern of employees rushing around and putting themselves at risks, they may want to consider reevaluating job descriptions, hiring more staff or updating their procedures to ensure not only a safer environment but a safer work culture as well.
4. Safety Fundamentals: Nearly 1 out of 3 members listed poor housekeeping at their facility as an issue and 13% listed unsafe work conditions. Whether this is caused by lack of knowledge or simply a disregard for application & compliance, adhering to basic safety fundamentals such as removing trip hazards can go a long way in improving a company's safety performance.
5. Stress at Work: Related and potentially intertwined with all the other factors listed above (especially fatigue and pressure), stress, according to [NIOSH](#), "can have a direct influence on worker safety and health."
6. Survey Employees: In order to determine whether or not the factors listed above are issues at their companies, employers should consider occasionally surveying employees, especially in regards to factors that may be difficult to observe or quantify. Periodic surveys can be a great tool to identify significant problem areas that could then be addressed through the company's safety program.

# Part 2: “Why I Stay Safe” Campaign

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## Why Launch a “Why I Stay Safe” Campaign?

Marketing research for decades has proven time and again that the most effective advertising campaigns appeal to emotions. Don't believe me? Google emotional marketing and see how many results show up (166 million as of this writing). Even though it appears to be common knowledge in the marketing world, for some reason this concept hasn't seemed to reach too far into workplace safety.

If you go to most manufacturing sites today, you'll most likely see a list of rules, the number of days since the last accident, a flyer for the next gimmicky safety contest and of course, the classic “Safety First” poster that few if anyone pays attention to. What about safety training and toolbox talks? You'll likely find at most companies that these are focused around policies, procedures or some sort of mechanical how-to such as lockout/tag out, etc. (which are necessary as well). What do these both have in common? They're based on facts but do very little to appeal to the emotions of employees.

Although statistics are important to workplace safety, numbers can come across as cold and disengaging, causing some employees to feel like they're just another number rather than a valuable member of the team. Often when this happens, employees check out and begin to go through the motions during safety training and toolbox talks, doing enough to check the box but not really engaging enough to adopt safety measures that would help prevent injuries.

So how can we avoid this? How can we get employees to reengage and connect with our safety message? By communicating their why!

By aligning our communications around what primarily motivates them (their why) instead of company goals (stats, numbers, keeping costs low, days since last accident, etc.), we invite employees to reengage with safety by pulling on their heart strings and giving them something of value they can connect with. This new or fresh emotional connection to safety enables them to see it from a healthier view and inspires them to take corrective actions based on what they're passionate about rather than what's only perceived to be important to the employer.

So what are my employees' why?

As mentioned earlier in this report, our survey found that when asked “what's your primary motivation for staying safe at work?”, most people checked social, relational and personal factors such as co-workers (67%), family members (63%), themselves (63%), and so they can enjoy things they love outside of work (50%). Leveraging these topics in your safety communications will again, help reconnect employees to your safety message. We'll provide some practical tips and strategies on how to do it in the following section.

# What is the “Why I Stay Safe” Campaign?

Based on the results of our survey, the *Why I Stay Safe Campaign* is aimed at helping employers to better connect their safety message to their employees by making it more personal. Think of it as changing the context or theme of your underlying safety message.

## 6 simple ideas to help launch your campaign!

1. Bulletin Boards: Use the [free campaign poster](#) or [flyer](#) as a centerpiece on a bulletin board in a public area (by the time clock, etc.). Ask employees to bring in pictures of their “whys” such as family, friends, pets or hobbies, and post them on the bulletin board. Often ask them to take a look at the board before starting their shift and remind themselves of why they want to stay safe.
2. Employee Newsletters: One of our members, Hess Print Solutions in Kent, OH, asks one employee a month to share why they stay safe with their coworkers. The “why” along with a picture of the employee is then featured on the safety page of their monthly employee newsletter. [Click here to see a sample.](#)
3. Toolbox Talk Ice Breakers: Ask employees to bring a picture of their “why” and allow one person to share with the group to help kickoff each of your typical safety toolbox talks.
4. Social Media: Share your “whys” on your company’s social media platforms and use **#WhyIStaySafe**. Ask employees to do the same!
5. Wearable Reminders: Another member, The Davey Tree Expert Company in Kent, OH, gives every employee a wearable picture wallet and asks them to place a picture of their family in them to constantly remind of why they should work safe. [Click here to see the wallet.](#)
6. Pledge Ceremonies: Ceremonies can be a great tool to invoke commitment and emotion! Create a *Why I Stay Safe* pledge that has room for employees to list or write in their “whys” (a picture could be used here as well). Host a simple campaign launch party or ceremony, asking employees to complete and sign their pledge. Even though the pledge is simple and non-binding, it can be a powerful tool to help create buy in.

## Free Campaign Resources

1. **Free Campaign Poster & Flyer:** These would make great centerpieces for a bulletin board where employees can post their own whys! *All the following are in PDF format.*
  - [Download Campaign Poster \(11x17\).](#)
  - [Download Campaign Flyer \(8.5x11\).](#)
2. **Free Campaign Graphics:** Feel free to download and share in your company emails, newsletters and social media pages! *All the following are in JPEG format.*
  - [Campaign Flyer at 50%](#)
  - [What's your why?](#)
  - [For my coworkers](#)
  - [For my loved ones](#)
  - [To do the things I love](#)
  - [To be the best I can be](#)
  - [What's your why & share your why](#)

## Conclusion

We hope that you found the insight and information provided in this toolkit valuable! If your company will be participating in the *Why I Stay Safe Campaign*, please sign-up in the Employer Pledge! This helps us to measure the impact of the campaign. We won't share contact info with anyone. Click here to take the [Employer Pledge](#) today!

## About the Portage County Safety Council

The [Portage County Safety Council](#) is 1 of 84 locally operated Ohio safety councils funded by the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation Division of Safety and Hygiene to promote workplace safety. Qualified companies may earn up to a 4% Ohio BWC premium rebate by actively participating in an Ohio Safety Council For more info about PCSC, please visit our [website](#) today!

### References:

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