

Dilemma & Decision

Dilemma: The virtue of necessity

Brief

A serious safety problem is threatening the future of Transal, a pipeline company. Hundreds of yearly accidents have led to high absenteeism, causing lost time, low morale, unsatisfactory efficiency levels, falling profits and a falling share price. Press articles about the company's lack of concern for its employees are having a very negative effect on customers, shareholders and staff. If the company is to survive it must develop a 'safety conscious culture'. The question is: how?

Task 1

Look at the three options open to Transal and discuss the potential benefits and disadvantages of each one.

1 The International School of Industrial Engineering

Send all technical staff members on an intensive 'safety awareness' course run by a high-profile school of engineering. The course is very expensive but has an excellent reputation. This will be emphasised at a press conference organised to announce the new company plans. On their return, the managers will train their teams. The forecast is to have improved safety conditions by this time next year.

2 Stanford, Traynor & Weldon Associates.

Bring outside consultants into every subsidiary to organise training schemes for all employees over a period of six months. This would be more expensive but would give low-level workers an opportunity to speak to experts and to point out problems. The results should be almost immediate and the experts would be on hand to talk to the press.

3 Safety Charity Challenge

Offer to give a sum of money to a community charity of the workers' choice every time they eliminate a safety hazard. An untested idea suggested by the communications department. If successful, it could lead to a lot of positive publicity and be very cost-effective. However, it relies on the employees' willingness to take part in such a scheme. There is no knowing how long it might take to improve conditions.

Task 2

Choose the best option and present your arguments to the class.

Write it up

Write a brief email to the Transal board recommending the best option and giving reasons for your decision. (See Style guide, p18.)

Decision:

Turn to page 141 and see what happened when a famous British company was faced with the same dilemma.

