



A Passion for Safety

Inspiring safety professionals through Visual Literacy



What's your emotional driver?

For Glenn Murray, corporate safety programs manager for ExxonMobil for 8 years and currently a managing director for COVE: Center of Visual Expertise, the emotional driver was “Tragically, I have been involved in the investigation of a number of very serious incidents, some involving the loss of a person’s life. It is not something you ever forget. No matter how long you work in safety, every time something like this happens it takes a little bit of your heart away, and you ask yourself, ‘What could I have done?’

“It’s hard to imagine anything more fulfilling than to save people’s lives.

Everything you do in safety is geared to saving lives.”



Glenn Murray

Managing Director

COVE: Center of Visual Expertise



What is it about workplace safety and health that inspires professionals?

Many confront challenges on numerous levels – implementing management systems; reducing at-risk behaviors; serving as change agents, influencers, coaches, motivators and disciplinarians when necessary; competing for resources with other departments; securing leadership support and frontline employee engagement. Rewards can be invisible – how do you know how many minor and serious injuries and fatalities have been avoided?

Others are more tangible: fewer incidents, reduced injury rates, improved morale, empowered people, committed leaders, cost avoidance, retained employees, more efficient work processes, better quality, and enhanced brand value – **people want to work with safe companies that protect their people.**



Rob Fisher

President

Fisher Improvement Technologies

“I get emotional about three experiences,” says Rob Fisher, president of Fisher Improvement Technologies, who has years of experience in safety. “My mom died as a result of a medical error, and I realized people get hurt and killed for no good reason at all.

I was one of the investigators on the Texas A&M bonfire collapse in 1999 that killed 12 people. All the kids that died were my own kids’ age. It wasn’t about stupid, drunk students as first thought. The system failed these kids, their families and parents.

And I consulted for a company that suffered seven fatalities every year. Later the company went five years without a fatality. The plant manager told me, ‘Please remember for the rest of your life, this isn’t about 35 deaths prevented over five years. These people are the pastor of a local church, the coach of a local soccer team, a teacher, a supervisor – they influence so many people.

Savings their lives impacted hundreds and hundreds of people.”



Passion & Emotions Applied

Studies indicate that up to 24 percent of safety incidents may be in part vision-related. One factor: at any given moment people see as little as 10 percent what they think they are seeing; the remaining up to 90 percent is filled in by the brain.

The COVE team has taken their passion and emotional connection to safety and health work and applied it to COVE's mission – “Seeing a safer tomorrow” – and to visual literacy, the core competency taught by COVE.

Visual literacy taught by COVE in live and virtual workshops and on-site with clients uses this framework:
What do you see? What does it mean? And what do you do about it?



Pete Batrowny

Advisory Board Member and Senior
Client Advisor

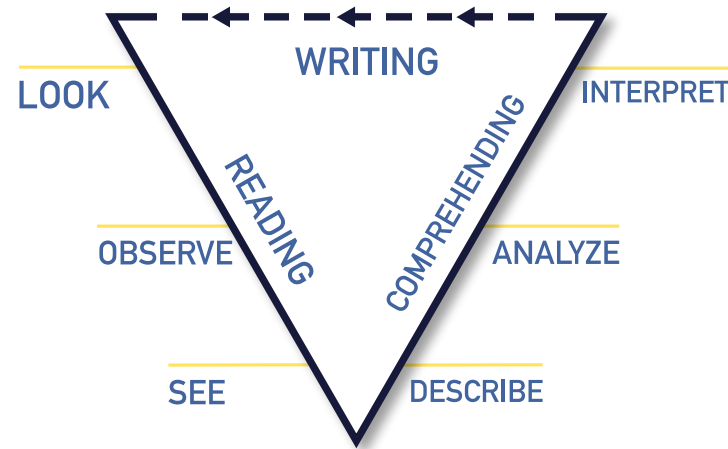
COVE: Center of Visual Expertise

“At a certain point in my career, I investigated serious injuries and fatalities (SIF),” says Peter Batrowny, COVE advisory board member and senior client advisor. Previously, he focused on safety and SIFs at a global energy company. “In almost every single case, the signals were present to prevent a SIF, but people didn’t see it or didn’t stop and do something about it. This is what visual literacy does. When I was first introduced to visual literacy a light bulb went off. It was an epiphany. Visual literacy is a re-application of art education taught at the Toledo Museum of Art. It’s very powerful in getting people to understand the limitations of looking at things.”

Visual Literacy at its heart is all about what we see, what it means, and what actions we take. COVE leverages a model developed by the Toledo Museum of Art to describe this process called The Art of Seeing Art™. Too often we look, but we don't really see what is in front of us. How often do we hear someone say, "I've walked by that a thousand times, but I just didn't see it until the incident occurred"?

By following a series of six steps: first **looking**; then **observing** more closely; truly **seeing** what may have been missed many times; **describing** what is truly seen; **analyzing** observations and descriptions;

interpreting the level of risk involved; and taking the actions needed to fix the hazard posing the risk, we slow down a bit and realize that things are not always as they appear at a first glance. Improving what we can see, and the accuracy of our interpretation improves our risk management processes and safety performance.



The Art of Seeing Art™

The Art of Seeing Art™

Safety is about people; about emotions, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors – in addition to technical expertise and engineering and systems controls -- which separates it from other business functions, says Doug Pontsler, former vice president of operations sustainability and EHS (Environment, Health and Safety) for Owens-Corning and chairman and managing director for COVE. .

“Visual literacy is part of the people side of safety. At Owens Corning I would hear time and again in incident reviews and site visits discussing the most recent incident that ‘We just didn’t see the hazard.’ I asked myself, ‘Why don’t we see something that can hurt us? It is so obvious after the fact that there must be a reason.



Doug Pontsler

Chairman & Managing Director

COVE: Center of Visual Expertise

Often the drive comes from a passion borne out of tragedy – personal or professional.

“On a personal level, my passion for wanting to protect people results from life experiences endured. Both parents died unexpectedly within two years of each other. It was devastating. This experience lit a fire of passion for keeping people safe and helping them understand the value of working together to better everyone.”

“I connect emotionally to visual literacy,” says Stacy Workman-Wyatt. “Safety professionals are inspired for many reasons. First and foremost, it is about caring and feeling personal responsibility for others. This passion for keeping people safe empowers us to march forward. We will do anything for the betterment of people.

I was drawn to COVE because visual literacy was a new way of thinking about safety in a way that was simplistic to use. COVE’s tools and resources are practical and applicable to everyday life. This is necessary when implementing new ways to improve safety.”



Stacy Workman-Wyatt

HSE Culture Leader

Cummins



A New Way to Improve Safety



Cummins, a multinational engine and power generation products manufacturer with \$19.8 billion in revenue in 2020 and 58,000 employees, piloted COVE’s visual literacy program, customizing its application to fit the needs of site locations. Employees received visual literacy training – it was not called safety training, which often has compliance or rules and policies connotations. Workman-Wyatt says visual literacy is a more “out of the box” approach. Cummins employees used visual literacy concepts and discovered opportunities to improve safety, she says. After the training, employees from other areas asked when they would receive the training because they heard about the success.

“This is not typical for employees to ask for safety-related training, and this stood out to me as an emotional connection,” says Workman-Wyatt.

Cummins learned visual literacy can be a stand-alone program or integrated into existing processes to enhance them. The company weighed heavily on the practical concepts and delivered training in a way conducive to team-building activities. Employees learned to remove biases that can block accurate observations and seeing with clarity; they learned to see better; and identified opportunities to improve safety at work and at home in their everyday routines.

Visual literacy isn't what you typically think of in safety but our inability to really see is a reality. Solving that can make a real positive difference. It resonates emotionally with professionals because they can relate to it in their work and personal lives. They get it. They've walked past their refrigerator a thousand times and don't remember what is on the door. They admit taking seeing for granted. They accept the reality of distractions, and the need to slow down a bit to truly see better.

COVE's mission is for visual literacy to eventually become a core competency for being an EHS professional. We'll never see absolutely everything but the awareness of the need to slow down a bit and take a second look will make a difference. Every EHS professional benefits from understanding what they see, what it means, and what actions to take. Our mission is to reject the traditional acceptance that hazards will be missed, that this is a reality to live with. There is something we can do about it. **We can learn to see better and reduce risks.** When this becomes a core competency in the profession, we will all be better for it.

This is the emotional passion and vision that drives the COVE team – and EHS pros who care about their people and will do whatever it takes to protect them.

A photograph of two workers in a factory or industrial setting, wearing hard hats and safety gear, standing and talking. The image is overlaid with a blue tint and two horizontal yellow lines.

A People Buisness



Find out more about this leading edge and innovative approach to a fundamental safety problem. Register for a Foundations of Visual Literacy workshop, contact our team, or read more at:

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