

latitude



ALL FOR ONE - THE MEERKAT WAY



ALL FOR ONE – THE MEERKAT WAY

Introduction

Everybody loves meerkats. But there is more to these cute furry creatures than first meets the eye and they can certainly teach us all a thing or two about safety.

As a species, meerkats should never have survived at all. They're tiny vulnerable creatures that live in an incredibly hostile environment full of savage predators such as jackals and martial eagles.

The fact that they survive at all is down to a single extraordinary talent: their ability to cooperate and create an interdependent culture. And that's the heart of this programme.

Beautifully filmed by BBC crews in the Kalahari Desert and narrated by "Olivier" award winning actor Toby Jones "All For One – The Meerkat Way" is a one of the freshest, most engaging safety films seen in a long, long time.

Objectives

"All For One" is a pragmatic philosophy designed to change or reawaken the way we feel about safety and help inspire a cultural step change towards an interdependent safety culture.

Topics covered include:

- Teamwork
- Interdependence
- The Safety Instinct
- The Importance Of Communication
- Prioritising Safety
- Continuous Improvement

Who Is The Film For?

"All For One – The Meerkat Way" is a remarkable film that everyone should and perhaps more importantly will want to view.



Discussion Points

What can we learn about safety from meerkats?

What is a safety culture?

What is the difference between a dependent, independent and interdependent safety culture?

What type of safety culture do we have?

What do we need to do to achieve an interdependent safety culture?

When was the last time you listened to or ignored your safety instincts?

How can curiosity help you stay safe at work?

What is more important than staying safe?

Who looks out for you at work?

Who do you look out for?

How well do you look out for new colleagues or visitors?

What forms does your safety communication take? How effective are they?

Do you feel cared for/safe at work?

What can we learn from each other about safety?

Once you identify a safety concern how quickly do you/we deal with it?

Whose responsibility is safety in your workplace?

When was the last time you stepped up to deal with a safety concern?

How can the "All For One" mentality of the meerkats help us stay safe?

How do we best achieve continuous improvement?

How do we react when others show their concerns for our safety? How should we react?

How can we improve our safety cooperation?



Meerkat Facts

Meerkats (*Suricata suricatta*) natural habitat is in Southern Africa's Kalahari Desert. They live for up to ten years in the wild.

They are the size of a half grown domestic cat. The young are the size of a mouse. Adults weigh the same as a bag of sugar and are 6 inches/ 15 centimetres tall on all fours and 1 foot/30 centimetres tall standing up.

They have physically evolved to their harsh environment. This includes ears that can close completely to keep out sand as they dig and a black band around their eyes reducing sun glare and allowing a sentry to spot a predatory bird up to 1000ft/300m away even in direct sunlight. They have a third eyelid between the eye and main eyelids that acts as a windscreen wiper removing sand with every blink.

They also have a 40% lower metabolic rate (than their counterparts in other parts of the world) that allows them to survive with less food and water.

They have a wide range of natural predators ranging from martial eagles to jackals and have developed a complex system of cooperation and communication to drastically improve their chances of survival.

When hunting for food meerkats communicate constantly and take it in turn to go on sentry duty. In the event of danger the guard raises the alarm and the group will either flee to an elaborate system of bolt holes or gather as a mob to deal with the danger together.

Meerkats have over 20 different (some multi syllable) sounds that have been recorded which have different meanings. These include lost calls, sentry/predator calls and pup feeding calls. The young make more noise the further they are from adults.

Each young meerkat has a (same sex) mentor to keep them safe and teach them about the meerkat world. Much of their behaviours/systems are learnt and meerkats in captivity may not even know how to raise their own young or forage for food.

Those on sentry duty make constant noises communicating what is happening. When things are fine mellow tones are emitted. When a predator is spotted at a distance a yellow alert beeping sound is made.

As the predator gets closer the sound varies depending on the predator, the martial eagle solicits the most frantic call from a distance. Meerkats allow some predators to get within 100ft/30m before sounding the red alert.



Links

A long term scientific study by Tim Clutton Brock took place between 1993-1998 (<http://magma.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0209/feature3/index.html>) as meerkats are unique in the extent and coordination of their cooperative activities.

www.meerkats.com – website dedicated to meerkats

www.meerkats.net – website dedicated to meerkats

www.meerkatsafety.com- “All For One” specific website

Some Useful Quotes

Cooperation:

Remember upon the conduct of each depends the fate of all – Alexander The Great

Cooperation is the thorough conviction that nobody can get there unless everybody gets there – Virginia Burden

Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable – Kenyan Proverb

The only thing that will redeem mankind is cooperation – Bertrand Russell

The wise thing about teamwork is that you always have others on your side – Margaret Carty

Business today is more than ever a question of cooperation – Orison Swett Marden

In union there is strength – Aesop

All for one and one for all – Alexandre Dumas

Instinct:

Instinct is untaught ability – Alexander Bain

Instinct is intelligence incapable of self consciousness – John Sterling

Good instincts usually tell you what to do long before your head has figured it out – Michael Burke



Exercises

Meerkat Mentor System

Every person in your company should choose or be allocated a mentor/guardian angel to look out for one another in much the same way Meerkats do. This can be as formal or informal as you want it to be. (Remember it should include anyone on your site including contactors and visitors).

Sometimes simply knowing there is someone to turn to discuss safety concerns is enough. If you want to achieve more a simple system of informal risk assessments of each other's workplace (with the necessary support of the central safety function) looking at unsafe conditions and unsafe behaviours could help bring your workplace a little closer to the meerkat way.

All For One

Ask the group to make a commitment to each other (not the company/organisation those who work together in it) to adopt an "All For One" attitude. This could include individual targets to improve or a sign (placed in a prominent location) making a group statement to look out for one another and signed by everyone making that commitment.

Meerkat Observations/Sentry Duties

Meerkats take it in turns to take time out from their usual activities to take on sentry duties looking out for the others in the group.

Health and safety cultures work better when regular observations take place. If you already have such a system ask the group how it could be improved. If not ask the group to contribute and participate in setting one up.

Why Curiosity Saved The "Kat"

Meerkats natural curiosity gives them a much better understanding of the dangers they face at any given time. Demonstrate to the group (using a topical workplace situation) how by asking WHY five times you can get to the root cause of any unsafe condition or behaviour.



Listen To Your Instincts

Ask the group to read the following:

Sceintsits hvae dsiocerevd taht as lnog as the fsrit and lsat lteters of each wrod are in pclae tehn the biran can siltl wrok out the meaning. Tihis is baecuse we rceognsie the wrods as a wohle rthear tahn sepllnig ecah one out.

This is an instinct that we have developed as a result of our reading experiences.

In much the same way very often we have subconsciously recognised warning signs that our natural safety instincts warn us about. It's that little voice in your head that says if I do that I might hurt myself but for some reason we do it anyway. Behind every major disaster there was at least one person who did not listen to their instincts.

Safety Culture

On the DVD there is a small extra film featuring leading Behavioural and Cultural Safety expert Martin Woodall.

This gives a brief explanation of what we mean by safety culture and the different types that exist.

Show this to the group and then ask them to discuss where they think your organisation currently is and the type of culture you want to achieve.

Say "Meerkat"

It can be difficult approaching a friend or colleague about a safety concern. So the next time you feel awkward just say "Meerkat" and it will instantly defuse any unnecessary self consciousness and open the debate intent on keeping someone safe.

Remember if someone says "Meerkat" to you it is because they care enough about your safety to do so.



Meerkat Encounter

We hope our film inspires some of your trainees towards greater safety excellence.

We would love the opportunity to send such a couple of your employees on a "Meet The Meerkat" encounter. Please contact us (01435 831500) if you think you have found any such deserving candidates and would like to find out more.

Meerkat Training

Our colleagues in Lattitude Safety are keen to help you take your health and safety culture that stage further. To talk to one of our safety experts please call Rob Coyle on: 01435 831500.

Meerkat Reminders/Incentives

We have put together a range of fun items from posters to soft toys to mouse pads to make sure trainees stay focussed on "The Meerkat Way" please contact us for more information.

LATTITUDE PRODUCTIONS LIMITED

PO Box 185
Rushlake Green
Heathfield
TN21 1AR

telephone 01435 831500

fax 01435 830193

website www.lattitudeproductions.co.uk

email info@lattitudeproductions.co.uk