

PS Asks

**Richard A. Pollock, CSP**

**PS:** You are the founder and president of CLMI Safety Training Inc. What advice can you offer to future safety leaders who aspire to become entrepreneurs?

**Rick:** Try to be the very best at what you do. Everyone has heard that “you hold your future in your own hands,” and I am here to tell you that this is true. Whether it’s the work you perform, developing your career, creating friendships, building a strong family, or whatever, if it’s worth doing then it’s worth doing well.

It’s my experience that those who excel work at it and are willing to invest in themselves. Continue to learn and experience new situations and opportunities and, above all else, develop networks of friends and professional colleagues. For anyone with an entrepreneurial spirit or drive, it is from these networks and your desire to excel that opportunities will present themselves.

**PS:** Is there one news website you visit daily? If so, what about that site do you like?

**Rick:** I have three websites that I visit regularly. The ASSE website ([www.asse.org](http://www.asse.org)) because it holds so much reference information; the BNA Occupational Safety and Health Reporter web service (<http://www.bna.com>), because of the in-depth information coming out of OSHA; and then CNN’s site ([www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)), because of its broad coverage.

**PS:** You author a blog, “From Rick’s Files.” What is your criteria for your posts?

**Rick:** The blog has been a great experience for me. I got the idea to start my own by reading other people’s blogs. I noticed that no one had been writing about safety training and leadership, just culture and the like, so I decided to give it a try. The response has been great, but it gets harder and harder to keep it up. I try to post twice every week when possible. My most important guideline is to not post junk. I always try to provide a tip or idea that could be useful when informing or motivating other professionals.

**PS:** What changes have you seen in the way training is delivered or how trainees respond to training?

**Rick:** During my career, training and training media have evolved from the use of film and slides to videotape and DVDs. Now we are on the threshold of an all-digital media world with web streaming and full interactivity.

However, this can be both good and bad. So many times I see trainers use the media, regardless of type, to deliver the content. Very little discussion, practice, trial and error occurs, so little real education or training occurs. A “plug and play, walk away” attitude helps no one.

There’s no doubt that when trainers follow the safety training development and delivery process laid out in ANSI/ASSE Z490.1, they achieve greater success. It is these trainers who are creating and delivering the type of training employees want to experience. Trainees want training with a purpose that’s engaging and fun. We are training adults, so let’s treat them like we want to be treated.

**PS:** What do you see as the next big development in training?

**Rick:** I think that in the near future we will no longer use the DVD format and go to all-digital media delivery. We are seeing it happen with Netflix, so why not at the workplace? I think we will see greater use of simulation, such as the Wii concept. This could be a great learning method for difficult or dangerous tasks.

We will also see more focus on human error and creating a “just culture.” These movements will lead to more employee involvement and self-directed learning. Imagine informing your trainees that there will be a test on “pick a subject” next Friday and this is what they need to learn. Then pointing them in the right direction and letting them find the answers. It could be fun!

**PS:** How do you stay on top of industry news and current events?

**Rick:** Keeping current with industry and regulatory changes is a requirement, so besides reading PS cover to cover, I subscribe to news services and read daily. I have three separate RSS feeds that deliver information about SH&E, OSHA and media technology, and I subscribe to several blogs. I also attend professional development events to learn, network and stay at the forefront.

**PS:** If you only had only one thing to share with readers, what would it be?

**Rick:** To be positive about life and be involved. We are all blessed by our family and friends, our circumstances and opportunities. With a positive, thankful attitude about life, everything becomes possible.

**PS:** What was your most difficult challenge in starting your own business?

**Rick:** First off, my biggest fear was not having a steady job to pay the bills or provide regular benefits. On top of that I had two young boys and was building a new home. However, entrepreneurs often underestimate risk and concentrate on the opportunity.

As a trained safety professional, not a businessperson, I knew little about how to start a business. Early on I read dozens of books about everything from creating a business plan, finance, marketing, sales management, inventory control, to how to deal with entrepreneurial stress and sleepless nights. Having faith in myself, an understanding family and perseverance proved to be the keys.

**PS:** What has been the most exciting moment of your career thus far?

**Rick:** There have been several exciting moments, so it’s difficult to choose. One that stands out is when Bucyrus-Erie Co. reached 2 million work hours without a disabling injury. At only 26 years old, this was a big deal for me. I learned a great deal as the plant safety manager for this heavy mining manufacturer with 1,800 employees. Reaching this milestone was a real thrill.

Another was when I took the stage at Safety 2008 in Las Vegas, NV, in front of 3,000 of my peers, and got to say “Welcome to Las Vegas.” I could tell my family that I was on stage in Las Vegas! Then this year has been extremely exciting for me as I am both the Chair of the ASSE 100th Anniversary Committee and the Elected Senior Vice President. What an honor to represent this wonderful Society at this important point in time.

**PS:** Who in the SH&E industry do you consider a mentor or look to for advice?

**Rick:** That’s a tough question because there are so many. Remember how old I am! I think the most important mentor for me was my father. He was a high school football and baseball coach, and had some great ideas on teaching and leading. I find myself using some of his ideas and sayings today in my own self-talk, so many years later.

Another important person for me professionally is Al Mims. He was my professor at the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater. Until just this year when he passed away, he was there providing guidance and moral support.

I better stop there since there have been so many, and I don't want to offend anyone by forgetting to mention their names.

**PS:** What is one thing *PS* readers may not know about you?

**Rick:** I love to fish for walleyes in Canada. From the time I was young, my family went to Red Lake, Ontario, for a summer vacation. I just simply love to fish, relax and let my mind wonder. I also love to sing, but can't remember the lyrics very well!

**PS:** You have been a Society leader for many years. What is the most rewarding part of volunteering?

**Rick:** I think the most rewarding part of volunteering is being involved, knowing that we are making a difference in the workplace and the profession. Meeting so many good people is another reward. Everywhere I go there are safety professionals with whom I have shared experiences. I look at it as an extended family. Another reward is seeing the fruits of your labor come to life. Look at the upcoming 100th Anniversary Celebration! How cool is that?

**Richard A. Pollock, CSP**, is president of CLMI Safety Training Inc. Founded in 1984, CLMI is a performance consulting company that provides training development services for SH&E professionals. Rick is also ASSE's Senior Vice President and the Chair for the Society's 100th Anniversary Committee. His blog can be found at [www.clmi-training.com/safetyblog](http://www.clmi-training.com/safetyblog).