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First, Nobody Gets Hurt

Field Guide preview

Chapter One: The First Number

Explore the opening chapter, worksheets and completed examples.

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Chapter 1

The First Number

Chapter 1 of the book. Safety is the first number a company reads, discusses and fixes, and a new chief executive makes that true inside two weeks with one page of numbers, a count of what harm costs and a letter to the board. Instruments: worksheets 1, 2 and 3.

Before anybody buys a guard or prints a card, you need three pages. The first sets the injury rate, the mod on your premium and the count of close calls side by side, each with the arithmetic that produced it, so the room argues about the work instead of the number. The second follows harm off the safety slide and onto the lines where it actually lands. The third tells your board what is about to happen to the rate, and why, before it happens.

I built all three at Kessling in my first two weeks, mostly at night, between the incident reports. None of them cost a dollar. What they bought was credibility I would need later. When the rate climbed in the first quarter, as my letter had said it would, the board read the near-miss count beside it and asked good questions instead of asking me to stop.

Skip them and the program starts life on somebody else's slide, the one that gets turned in under a minute. You'll spend the first quarter explaining a number you never put in context, to a board with no reason yet to believe you.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE WHEN IT IS MISSING

- Safety gets one slide early in the board deck, a rate and a colored arrow, and the chair moves on within a minute.
- Ask for last year's near-miss count and the room goes quiet until somebody offers to find out.
- The renewal carries an experience mod, and nobody at the table can say what it costs above an average record.
- Incident reports are filed and signed, the root-cause line names the injured person, and the corrective action reads "retrained."
- Overtime, turnover and on-time delivery each have an owner and an explanation, and no explanation mentions an injury.
- The chief executive learns about a recordable from the monthly report, weeks after somebody went to the clinic.
- A sign at the gate tallies the days without a lost-time case, and the plant treats a long streak as good news.

The tell is a board that has seen the rate every month for years and has never once been shown the near-miss count beside it.

IN THE BOOK

Chapter 1 argues that safety belongs not on a slide ahead of the money but inside it, arriving on lines with other names: the premium everybody sees, and the overtime, scrap, turnover, late shipments and audited customers nobody files under safety. The habits that keep people unhurt are the habits that keep a process in control (a written way to do each job, a cause instead of a culprit, leaders out on the floor), so a plant short on one is short on both, and its log of injuries tends to show it first. Its first instrument is a page holding three numbers, the TRIR, the mod and how many near misses people reported, each with its arithmetic, and the operating lines an injury lands on printed beneath them. Then come three moves only the chief executive can make: safety opens every meeting, every recordable is on your desk inside 24 hours and its root cause inside 72, read by you, and the board gets a letter before the next rate arrives, warning that the rate is likely to go up before it comes down. Its rule is that safety comes first in what you read, what you discuss and what you fix. At Kessling the page read 6.8, 1.38 and 12 by Day 14, the letter went on Day 12, and when the first quarter closed at 7.9 the board had been told to expect it. Its Do This list, as a checklist:

Read two years of recordable reports yourself, oldest first, noting each machine and shift that keeps reappearing.

Set the rate, the mod and the near-miss count on a single page, the sum behind each printed beneath it.

Phone your carrier for the loss runs: each claim, what it has cost so far, and which are still open.

Learn which customers audit your record, the limit each one sets, and how far above it you sit.

Make safety the first item at your next meeting and at every meeting you run after it.

Send the board a one-page letter before the next rate lands, with the commitment, the 24-hour rule and the warning in it.

WORKED EXAMPLE

The reading set the pace. Ayesha Kimbrell pulled all 93 recordable reports from 24 months of files at both plants, 47 from the latest year and 46 from the one before, and I read them in date order between Day 1 and Day 14, fitting a walk of every shift around them. Most pinned the root cause on a person and prescribed retraining or a reminder, and the same few machines and the same shift kept turning up. The first number came from the latest twelve months: 47 × 200,000 ÷ 1,374,000 = 6.84, printed as 6.8, or roughly seven injuries on the log each year for every hundred people working full time. By plant, Anderson's 31 on 824,400 hours made 7.5 and Huntington's 16 on 549,600 made 5.8. Nine of the 47 were lost-time cases, and between them they cost 386 days away from work.

Brenda Neal brought the renewal. A base premium of $1.56 million at a mod of 1.38 meant $2.15 million paid, and the 0.38 above 1.00 was worth about $590,000 a year, the $2.15 million less the $1.56 million. The third number was 12 near-miss reports for the year. Turned around, 47 ÷ 12 = 3.9, almost four recordables for every close call anyone had put on paper, in two plants running five shifts between them.

Beneath the three went the operating lines, and they read like a portrait of second shift. Turnover there was 47 percent, 101 people gone from 214 in a year. Overtime ran at 14 percent of all hours worked, and on-time delivery at 81 percent. Corinne Whitaker had a hiring plan for the first, operations had a budget for the second and sales had an account of lead times for the third, and each made sense alone. Together they described newcomers working short-handed and long after dark, which is how people get hurt and how orders ship late.

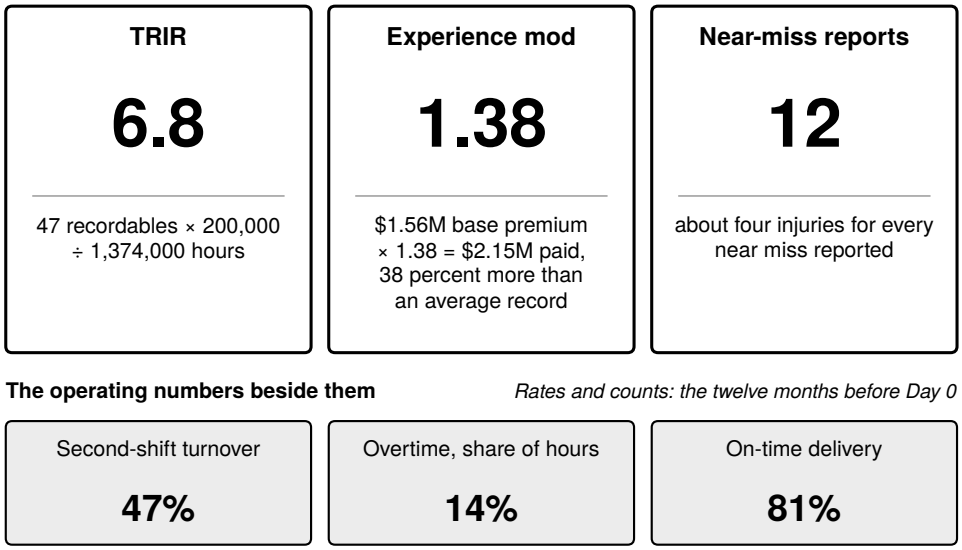


Fig. 01-03: The first page at Kessling, Day 0: three safety numbers, and beneath them three operating numbers that turned out to describe the same problem.

The customers made the page urgent. Brenda had taken me through them on Day 2: Stanhope Implement at $20.4 million and Carrow Truck Bodies at $10.8 million, $31.2 million together and 26 percent of revenue, both holding suppliers under a trailing rate of 3.5 and both on probation since seven months before I arrived. Neither had cut an order, Brenda said. They had simply stopped sending us anything new. Our 6.8 ÷ 3.5 = 1.94, almost twice their limit. Meanwhile Haddon Street's plan wanted EBITDA to climb about 12 percent a year, from $13.2 million to $16.6 million at the close of Year 2. The letter had gone out on Day 12, so when Vince Prescott asked on Day 21 what this would cost and when he'd see it, half the answer was already in his file. The rate would probably climb in the first

quarter. The price of the first fixes would come within two weeks. And the savings would arrive by the close of Year 2, in overtime and scrap, in turnover and freight, and in the two customers, on Brenda's signature rather than mine. He wrote it down and went back to my first page.

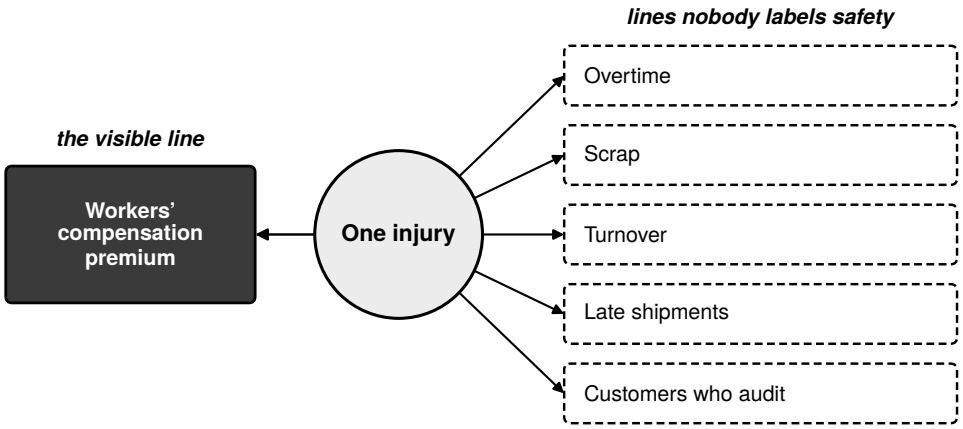


Fig. 01-02: Where an injury lands on the P&L: one line the board calls safety, and five it files under something else.

WORKSHEETS

Three worksheets carry this chapter: the page you read before any other, the lines where harm lands, and the letter that tells the board what's coming.

Worksheet 1

The first page — three numbers

Puts the TRIR, the mod and the near misses reported on one page, each with its arithmetic, and three operating lines beneath them. The safety professional brings the counts, finance brings the premium, and the chief executive builds the page.

Twelve months, from and to

The rate. Recordables from the OSHA log, hours from payroll, each total matched to its source first.

Recordables, and lost-time cases among them

Hours worked, as payroll paid them

TRIR: recordables × 200,000 ÷ hours

The premium. From the last renewal and the carrier's rating worksheet.

Experience mod in force

Base premium, before the mod

Premium paid: base × mod

Paid above an average record

The near misses. The same twelve months, every report on file.

Near-miss reports, and per recordable

Beside them, in order: turnover on your worst shift, overtime's share of hours, orders shipped on time.

Operating line	Today	A year ago	Who owns it

Every figure traced to the log, the carrier or payroll, with its arithmetic printed

Kessling's version

Ayesha Kimbrell's counts and Brenda Neal's premium figures made one page by Day 14, in front of the board on Day 21. The near-miss line did the most work: 12 reports against 47 recordables.

Line	Twelve months to Day 0	The arithmetic, or the owner
TRIR	6.8	47 × 200,000 ÷ 1,374,000 hours
By plant	Anderson 7.5, Huntington 5.8	31 on 824,400 hours, 16 on 549,600
Lost-time cases	9	6 at Anderson, 3 at Huntington
Experience mod	1.38	$1.56 million × 1.38 = $2.15 million paid
Above an average record	$0.59 million a year	$2.15 million − $1.56 million
Near-miss reports	12	12 ÷ 47 = 0.26 for every recordable
Second-shift turnover	47 percent	101 leavers on 214, Corinne Whitaker
Overtime, on-time delivery	14 percent of hours, 81 percent	operations, sales

WORKSHEET 2

The cost of harm — where an injury lands on the P&L

Follows harm off the safety slide onto every line it reaches, the premium first and then the five nobody labels safety. The chief financial officer fills it in from the ledger, a line at a time, with each line's owner in the room.

Twelve months covered, and CFO signed on

The line everybody sees.

Premium paid, and the mod behind it

Paid above an average record, a year

The lines nobody labels safety. A row each: overtime, scrap, worst-shift turnover, late shipments and freight, audited customers.

Line	Twelve-month total	Kept by	How an injury reaches it

The customers who audit.

Who audits us, and the rate each allows

Their revenue and share, and where we stand

One injury, followed. One recordable from the last year, traced past the claim.

The stop, the cover, the overtime, the scrap, the late order, and anyone who left afterward

Each total ties to the ledger, and finance presents the page, not safety

Kessling's version

The twelve months to Day 0, the baseline for Brenda Neal's bridge. On Day 21 I told Vince Prescott the money would show on the five lines under the premium, and at Day 730 the bridge credited the premium itself with $0.25 million of a $4.40 million gain.

Line	Twelve months to Day 0
Premium	$2.15 million paid at a mod of 1.38, $0.59 million above an average record
Overtime	14 percent of hours, 192,360 hours, at a straight-time rate of $22.86
Scrap	$4.90 million, 4.1 percent of revenue
Second-shift turnover	47 percent, 101 leavers, about $11,300 to replace each one
Late shipments	81 percent on time, $0.81 million of premium freight and expediting
Customers who audit	Stanhope $20.4 million and Carrow $10.8 million, 26 percent of revenue, both on probation at a limit of 3.5

WORKSHEET 3

The letter to the board — the commitment, the 24-hour rule and the warning

One page to the board in three parts, sent before the next rate reaches it. The chief executive writes it and signs it, and nobody else's name goes on it.

Sent to the board on

The meeting it arrives before, and its date

1. The commitment. What goes first, from now on.

What I will put first in every meeting and on every board page, starting when

2. The 24-hour rule. In your own words, with the people who make it work.

How fast a recordable reaches me, how fast its root cause follows, and who reads it

Who calls me, at any hour

3. The warning. Why the rate is likely to climb before it falls, and what to read while it does.

Why it will rise, in two sentences

When the rise will probably show

The numbers to read beside the rate

One page, signed by me
Sent before any new rate reached the board
The near-miss count named as the number to read first

> **Kessling's version**
> I sent it on Day 12, one page, signed by me. The commitment: safety would open every meeting I ran, as it had opened my first staff meeting on Day 10. The rule: any recordable at Kessling on my desk inside 24 hours and its root cause inside 72, each report read by me, none summarized. Behind it stood what I had asked of Janine Roth on my first morning, a call at any hour when anyone was hurt, and Ray Dunleavy had made the first one on Day 3. The warning: the rate would probably climb in the first quarter as people started reporting cuts and strains they had kept to themselves, and the board should read the near-miss count first when it did. Q1 closed on Day 91 at 7.9, and at the Day 98 board nobody panicked.

RUNNING IT WITH THE TEAM

These three pages need fewer people than any others in the guide, and they should. Two people help with the first, the chief financial officer owns the second, and the third is yours alone. The safety professional counts the recordables and whatever near-miss reports exist, finance's analyst pulls the hours from payroll, and you sit with the two of them for an hour to trace every figure back to where it lives. Give it a week on the calendar and a few hours of your own.

The cost of harm belongs to the chief financial officer and takes two sittings. In the first, finance pulls the twelve-month totals from the ledger. In the second, an hour with the owner of each line (HR for turnover, operations for overtime, sales for on-time delivery), each owner says how an injury reaches that line and you write it down without arguing. Net nothing out yet. The page shows where harm lands, and the savings wait for a bridge built later from the same baseline.

The letter you write alone, in one sitting, and then leave overnight. Read it in the morning as your chair will. If the warning sounds like an excuse, rewrite it until it reads as a forecast. Then send it before anyone else can put a new number in front of the board.

Then read the page aloud at your first staff meeting, standing, arithmetic and all, after opening with the most recent injury: what happened, and what you still don't know. Day One in this guide runs that session. Say at the start that nobody is on trial for these numbers, and say at the end what each person owes you and by when. The safety professional's job in that room is to hold the source of every figure and answer "where did that come from?" before anyone has to ask it twice.

What goes wrong the first time. The hours don't agree with payroll, and the rate shifts a tenth once they do, so tie them before anything is printed. The near-miss count comes back as "we don't track that," which is an answer, so write it down as the first finding. Finance wants to show only the premium because it's the line with a tidy number on it. And somebody suggests softening the warning, or holding the letter a quarter until the numbers look better. Don't. A warning sent after the rate rises reads as an excuse.

THREE QUESTIONS FOR MONDAY

1. If your chair asked tomorrow how many near misses your people reported last year, who would answer, and how long would it take them?

2. Which customers would stop giving you new work if your rate crossed their limit, and how far are you from that limit today?

3. What will your board decide if the rate rises next quarter and nobody told them in advance that it would?

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

You should now have, on paper:

- Worksheet 1 — the rate, the mod and the near-miss count on one page, each with its arithmetic, the operating lines beneath
- Hours tied to payroll, recordables tied to the log and the premium tied to the renewal
- Worksheet 2 — the cost of harm, line by line, signed by your chief financial officer
- The customers who audit you, the rate each one allows, and the gap between it and yours
- Worksheet 3 — the letter, signed and sent, with the date the board received it
- Safety written at the top of the agenda for your next meeting