



What It Takes to Win a CCIA Platinum Safety Recognition Award

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CCIA established the Platinum Safety Recognition Award program in 2012 to recognize and reward those member firms that have met or exceeded national safety standards. Members are asked to submit safety indicators such as incidence rates and experience modification rates (EMR), as well as answers to open-ended questions, to allow judges to evaluate and rank the applicants, and determine winners.

In its planning stages, the Platinum Award Program and its method of determining winners based on both objective data and subjective analysis was greeted with some skepticism by those who were concerned about the potential for “playing favorites.” However, over the years, the program has matured and gained a reputation for fairness and balance. A key reason for that well-earned standing is the judges’ resolve to select only those firms that are deemed the best of the best. The judges reach their outcomes by closely examining the safety statistics of applicants, the information applicants submit to the open-ended questions, and the overall quality of the application.

For some hands-on feedback on what it takes to submit a successful application, I asked two experienced judges, Ed Shapiro, President, Heavy Equipment Services, and chair of CCIA’s Safety Committee, and Rick Poirier, VP of Risk Management, AssuredPartners New England, to give me their impressions of serving as a judge for the Platinum Awards. Specifically, I asked them to respond to two questions: what do they look for in an application, and what advice do they have for applicants?

Ed Shapiro said he looks at all the numbers on injuries, reportables, hours worked, and their write-up, in a package. The information has to be credible, and their safety manual has to be more than one that “collects more dust than content.” He said, “you can tell when someone’s into it and someone’s just mailing it in. Those who simply submit the same information but only change the date on their application from year-to-year are not into it. We notice that.”

In terms of what advice he has for applicants, Ed responded, “if you have a good safety program, the

numbers will reflect that.” He added, “your safety culture starts with your people, but people have to believe it. If done right, that will all come out in the presentation.” One more thing: “The presentation must be well-organized and well-supported. You can tell when someone has really put some thought into their application. I believe a well-organized presentation is a reflection of your safety program. If you care that much about submitting a great application, then you must care that much about your safety program.”

Rick Poirier says he looks at the measures asked for, but also for any metrics that are not requested, such as the number of staff with safety responsibility. He likes to read applications that describe a problem, the path to a solution, the ultimate remedy, and any creativity that was applied. Also, he wants to know how employees are engaged in a company’s safety program, and how the leadership and management of the company is involved. “And don’t just tell me what you do, show me how you do it. Tell me about any creative solutions you’ve come up with for common problems.” Also, “how are you addressing the behavioral side of safety? How are you making use of technology? Those are some of the things I look for.”

What kind of advice does Poirier have for anyone applying for a Platinum Award? First of all, “If you have to dig too deep to come up with enough information about your safety program, maybe your company isn’t quite ready.” If you think you’re ready, here are a few tips:

- Don’t describe how you just prevented accidents. Go further. Provide information about your post-injury management program, return-to-work, medical management, and occupational clinic relationship.
- We want to know how you reward and acknowledge success versus incentivize safety.
- Give judges a 360-degree view of your safety program. How do you identify your exposure? What’s your reporting process? How are you taking corrective actions and following up as needed? Do you use accidents as a learning experience? How are you working toward a zero-accident culture?

While serving in a staff function to the judges’ panel, I have two additional points. I have noticed that the judges don’t necessarily focus on the hard numbers, good or bad. They take a more nuanced approach to it by looking at the trend or progression of the numbers over the last three years. The judges will reward applicants who are trending in the right direction, even though their numbers may not be as glamorous as others. In addition, applicants are rated individually, but ultimately compared to peers in their respective categories of construction. And those with the best total application – numbers, answers to the open-ended questions, and quality of presentation – tend to come out winners.