

# & CAR RIDES & BRIGHT IDEAS

By Briana Carlesimo



Long, open road. Nothing in view but fields and cows. He was heading home to his farm in Kentucky, but his head was stuck somewhere back at work.

Then, it hit him. **STAR.**

Shawn Bryant, manager of Safety Health & Environment at DENSO Manufacturing Athens Tennessee (DMAT), called up the office and asked Cory Hartman, senior specialist of Safety at DMAT, to write the word "STAR" on a sticky note. When he returned to work the next week, he created a program that would improve safety and completely transform DMAT's training program.



## WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

In 2012, Shawn went to Japan for a Global Safety Management Seminar where he learned about Japanese culture and ideas. When he came back in 2012, he brought a brilliant concept with him: the dojo.

The idea behind the dojo is to give associates the chance to be hands-on with their training compared to traditional training seminars. With the new dojo approach, associates can actually feel danger without

the risk and react in the moment instead of completing a lecture-based training course.

Shawn presented the concept to DMAT's president. It was quickly approved and given a sooner timeline than Shawn had expected. He was given six weeks and money straight from the president's budget to make the dojo a reality.

## ★ THE INFLUENCE OF THE DOJO

According to Shawn, that feeling of danger without the threat of getting hurt, along with teaching others how to handle a similar situation, results in a potential 90 percent retention rate for associates compared to the previous average retention rate of 20 percent from lecture-based training.

The dojo has also made accident rates almost non-existent -- DMAT has added 400 new associates since the start of the dojo, and they still haven't seen a spike in accidents! Shawn said that "DMAT has accident rates that are 70 percent lower than the industry average" and a large reason behind those low rates is the dojo training.

That's not all.

"The dojo is a great training tool because it empowers associates to take the lead and train the future of the company," said Shawn. "Associates become leaders through the program by sharing their own knowledge and experiences with new associates."

DMAT's dojo approach is definitely making a difference and getting some attention. Other DENSO sites are starting to implement the dojo approach. DENSO Manufacturing Tennessee (DMTN) adopted the dojo training last fall, and DENSO Mexico S.A. DE C.V. (DNMX) is creating a similar program. Shawn has even presented the dojo idea at various industry events hosted by the Tennessee Occupational Safety and Health Administration (TOSHA).

## ★ FROM DOJO TO STAR

Shawn didn't just stop at the dojo. One day, as he was driving to his farm from work, he came up with another idea to really take training and safety to the next level: the STAR (Success To Associate Recognition) Team.

The goal was to have associate volunteers cross-check safety across different areas of the plant in order to generate ideas and kaizen as needed. Training on what to look for is provided by Cory Hartman, the leader of the STAR team.

"The STAR Team helps further improve our safety on the floor so that it is constantly top of mind," said Cory. "It's a lot easier for issues to be missed when we work so closely to each of our lines, and the STAR Team gives a fresh perspective and a fresh set of eyes on a different area. It also challenges associates to hone in on their safety and quality-first mindset and share their expertise and ideas with others."

The STAR Team follows OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) criteria for a managed safety and health system and was implemented to help DMAT stay safe. In fact, when auditors from OSHA came to visit for four days, they couldn't find a single issue!

Creation of the STAR Team and the dojo, along with mentoring other sites and being a key partner with OSHA in Tennessee, has helped DMAT receive the prestigious VPP Volunteer STAR (Safety through Accountability and Recognition) award for the third time this past January! This award is given to the best of the best in the area of safety and health programming and performance, and no other DENSO site has received it.

Congratulations to the DMAT team and thank you for leading the way in safety!

