



Small
Choices.
Big
Consequences.

SPOT THE SLIDE

When "Nothing Happened" Becomes "This Is How We Do It"

Serious incidents don't always begin with a dramatic failure. Sometimes they begin with a shortcut that worked, a condition everyone got used to, or a rule that slowly stopped being followed. This tool helps teams recognize when everyday work is drifting away from the intended safe standard—and intervene before the deviation becomes normal.

HOW A LITTLE THING BECOMES "THE WAY WE DO IT"



STANDARD

"I must follow
the rule to stay safe."
100% Compliance



DEVIATION

"The rule is slow;
I'll try it this way once."
Trialing a shortcut



NORMALIZATION

"I've done this
50 times and I'm fine."
Shortcut becomes
the habit



SOCIALIZATION

"This is just how
we do things here."
Teaching the shortcut
to others

THE ABSENCE OF AN INCIDENT DOESN'T PROVE THE SHORTCUT IS SAFE.
SOMETIMES IT ONLY MEANS THE CONSEQUENCE HASN'T HAPPENED YET.

FOUR REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES SAME PATTERN. DIFFERENT SITUATIONS. REAL RISKS.

1



"BUT NOTHING HAPPENED."

A skipped step today
can become a tragedy
tomorrow.

2



THE DRIFT INTO FAILURE

Small adjustments
can push us far beyond
safe limits.

3



SOCIAL PROOF & THE NEW HIRE

What veterans do
today shapes what
new employees do
tomorrow.

4



GRADUAL DEGRADATION

Little changes add up—
what looks minor today
can lead to a major
injury.



It's the Little Things...
Until It's Everything.

Scan for more
Safety Resources



FACILITATOR GUIDE & SPEAKER NOTES

SPOT THE SLIDE | TEAM DISCUSSION TOOL | 10-15 MINUTES

Use these short, focused examples to start meaningful conversations about the little things that can lead to big consequences in your workplace.

1

"BUT NOTHING HAPPENED."



- ▶ **The Little Thing:** Skips a required step "just this once."
- ▶ **What Happens Next:** Nothing goes wrong, so it feels like a successful efficiency gain.
- ▶ **The Impact:** The next time, the step feels optional. Eventually, a serious incident is only a matter of time.
- ▶ **Micro-Action:** Are we safe, or have we just been lucky? Report "successful" shortcuts as near-misses.

SPEAKER NOTES:

- Ask the team if they have ever skipped a step because it was faster or easier.
- Point out that a negative outcome not occurring can reinforce unsafe behavior.
- Encourage a culture where we report shortcuts before they lead to harm.

2

THE DRIFT INTO FAILURE



- ▶ **The Little Thing:** A nuisance alarm is adjusted or ignored.
- ▶ **What Happens Next:** The "acceptable" range is widened over time.
- ▶ **The Impact:** The system operates outside of its design parameters, and real warnings may be missed.
- ▶ **Micro-Action:** Perform a "Standard vs. Reality" audit—compare the written procedure to how the job is actually done.

SPEAKER NOTES:

- Explain that small adjustments and work-arounds can slowly push operations outside of safe limits.
- Ask the team where they see "drift" happening in your facility.
- Discuss what could be done to stop it.

3

SOCIAL PROOF & THE NEW HIRE



- ▶ **The Little Thing:** A senior lead doesn't wear required PPE.
- ▶ **What Happens Next:** New employees assume the rule is "corporate fluff."
- ▶ **The Impact:** Erodes the authority of safety protocols; rules are viewed as suggestions.
- ▶ **Micro-Action:** The Shadow Rule—remember, people are watching. Your actions set the standard.

SPEAKER NOTES:

- Talk about how new employees learn by watching what others do.
- Ask: "What are you modeling for someone who is new, younger, or watching you?"
- Reinforce that everyone's actions—no matter how small—send a message.

4

GRADUAL DEGRADATION



- ▶ **The Little Thing:** A tool is dull, a floor is slick, or a ladder is missing a foot.
- ▶ **What Happens Next:** Workers adapt to compensate.
- ▶ **The Impact:** The "new normal" requires 100% human perfection to stay safe. One distraction can lead to an injury.
- ▶ **Micro-Action:** Use the "Fresh Eyes" technique—have someone from another department look for what seems "off."

SPEAKER NOTES:

- Point out that we often adapt to deteriorating conditions without realizing it.
- Ask the team to think of one thing in their area that looks worn, out of place, or messy.
- Encourage reporting and fixing small issues before they become bigger problems.



GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where have you seen small shortcuts become the norm?
2. What makes it easy to overlook little safety issues?
3. How can we make it easier to speak up about work-arounds?
4. What is one small change we can make this week?



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ☒ Small deviations can lead to major risks.
- ☒ The absence of an incident isn't proof of safety.
- ☒ Our actions influence others.
- ☒ Pay attention to gradual changes.
- ☒ Speak up, even when it seems minor.



Small Actions Today.
Safer Tomorrows.

It's the Little Things...
Until It's Everything.