



INSIDE THE ROBERT W. CAMPBELL AWARD

By Markisan Naso, associate editor

The Robert W. Campbell Award is presented annually to companies that demonstrate the highest level of commitment to safety, health and environmental management. Created two years ago by the National Safety Council and the ExxonMobil Corp., the award is supported by a network of international partners interested in validating the efforts of businesses and fostering a spirit of cooperation around the globe. By recognizing those companies dedicated to safety, health and environmental efforts – and sharing their successes – the Campbell Award strives to impact the way workplaces integrate safety and health into their business functions.

Generating the spirit and skill of the Campbell Award

Mei-Li Lin, program director for the Robert W. Campbell Award and executive director of research and statistical services at the National Safety Council, talked to *Safety+Health* about the creation of the Campbell Award, its message and goals, and the intricate process that ultimately determines who walks away with the trophy.

Safety+Health: How did the Campbell Award come about?

Mei-Li Lin: There is a great deal of discussion that by incorporating safety, health and environmental management into everyday business operations, corporations can better protect their workers, improve their productivity and increase their profits. Yet, to convey this idea, safety and health professionals need the right language and strong evidence to demonstrate to their bosses that safety and health is actually a right thing and good business for the companies. But there is little documented evidence and few case studies.

We tried to invite different companies to write case studies that document and demonstrate the correlation between SH&E and business performance. But we soon realized that asking individual employees of a company to document this level of system, organization and effort is extremely difficult and time-consuming. We needed to come up with a mechanism to give them proper recognition, encourage them to share their successes and finally make an impact together. We started about three years ago.

S+H: Why did you approach ExxonMobil?

Lin: We wanted to find corporate partners that not only could provide funding but also could embrace the fundamental objectives of the program. We needed a partner that could help us champion the idea to different companies.

Mr. Mike Henderek from ExxonMobil is an active member of our board. When we communicated this idea with Mr. Henderek, he completely shared the same vision and brought the idea back to ExxonMobil. They decided to provide \$1 million in funding for the program, and the whole concept of the Campbell Award was soon co-developed.

S+H: What is the goal of the Campbell Award? What does it honor?

Lin: There are four different goals. We want to recognize companies that really invest in SH&E and bring that into their core by completely integrating safety, health and environmental management into their business operations.

Secondly, we want to establish a process where we can actually validate their efforts and measure the performance.

The third is we want to use a rigorous review process, utilizing an international panel of expert reviewers to help us look at the applications, and help evaluate and capture the successes observed and lessons learned.

The fourth, which might be the most important thing, is to really foster the sharing of success stories.

We want to convert winning cases into business cases that can be used by business and engineering schools so the SH&E messages can be internalized and embraced by the future generation of engineers and business leaders. We want to make that kind of impact. In my view the work actually starts when we recognize the winners.

S+H: Many global partners support the award. Why is this international presence important?

Lin: The global partners are vitally important because this is an international award. Sound SH&E systems can benefit workers around the world, and present great value to all

companies that have the leadership and commitment to invest in them. So, how do we provide a platform that enables the cross-sharing of SH&E-minded organizations around the world? It is a collective effort, and a unified voice to make sure the importance and significance of safety, health and environmental management are heard.

S+H: How are applications submitted?

Lin: We communicate with the global partners, and they help encourage companies in their respective regions to compete for the award. But it's not a nomination process. Any company can apply as long as they meet the application requirements. When applications come in we have a very clear review process. If the application doesn't pass the qualification requirements, we send it back and kindly remind them what qualifications we are looking for. If they meet the criteria but are missing some of the elements, we will notify them and let them know we are looking for additional elements. Then we send it out to the international panel of reviewers. Typically the application is reviewed by at least five international reviewers.

S+H: How are the reviewers selected, and what are their responsibilities?

Lin: Each global partner is asked to nominate two or three reviewers. We collect reviewer profiles and circulate them among our global partners to obtain their approval and to see if there are any objections.

The reviewer, based on the guidelines and evaluation form we provide, rates each of the elements accordingly. They are asked to provide verbal comments. In other words, rather than simply giving scores, they also are encouraged to justify their scores. What do they see as far as strengths and weaknesses? Do they see anything that can be improved?

S+H: What kind of feedback from observers or participants have you received about the Campbell Award?

Lin: Most reviewers feel this is a very rewarding experience. The response has been overwhelmingly encouraging. We will run through the exercise every year because the evaluation process, elements and criteria need to evolve and grow with the current state of the emerging SH&E issues.

Now, talking about participants, we had two or three times more companies that sent letters of intent to us, but weren't

Who was Robert W. Campbell?

Robert W. Campbell was a pioneer in the safety movement in the United States. At the beginning of the 20th century worker injuries and deaths were not only commonplace, but expected. High-profile tragedies brought attention to the workplace safety crisis.



A graduate of Stanford University and Hastings College of Law, Campbell was chief of the legal staff at one of the largest steel manufacturers in the nation. In response to the growing safety problems of industrialization, Campbell was selected in 1908 to serve as the first chairman of Illinois Steel's corporate-wide safety committee, one of the first of its time. In this capacity, Campbell's interest in accident prevention was aroused. Under his guidance, this forward-looking committee organized the company's first formal accident prevention programs, which included the sharing of information and safety practices among all company plants, establishing safe work practices for many jobs, and developing safety-training programs for workers and supervisors in several languages.

Due to his pioneering spirit and humanitarian outlook on safety and health in business, Campbell was selected by his peers to serve as president of the newly formed National Safety Council in 1913. Campbell's counsel and leadership in the formative days of the council were powerful aids in the development of organized accident prevention efforts on a national scale.

Throughout his career Campbell promoted gathering data, obtaining expert advice, and sharing the lessons learned and results of investigation for the betterment of others. He died in 1947 at age 72.

able to complete the whole application process. The encouraging feedback we received from the companies that did not finish the final applications was that the evaluation criteria allowed them to examine their systems. That self-examination and the ability to benchmark their system to the performance indicators were very good learning experiences.

S+H: What sets the Campbell Award apart from other safety and health excellence awards?

Lin: This award is not as luxurious as other awards that give a lot of money for recognition – it is really the rigor and the process, and the diligence from our partners, that make this a great award. It is unique also because it is a very energizing collective and cooperative effort among the many organizations, and the many expert reviewers from various countries.

I would like to believe we are shaping what comes next in terms of SH&E and how it is integrated with the fundamental business functions. We are striving toward that, and it's just a rewarding experience for everyone involved.