



Workplace Safety Management: How To Become World-Class



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Workplace Safety Management: How To Become World-Class

Can health and safety metrics be converted into business metrics? If so, are companies leaving significant value on the table by merely achieving a “good” safety culture and meeting the minimum OSHA requirements? What does it take to go above and beyond basic safety requirements and programs and become a world-class safety organization?



Simply meeting the minimum OSHA requirements can have a negative effect on some organizations, including an impact on the bottom line. That said, here are the steps to creating a value-driven safety culture that exists in all levels throughout the organization and influences executive decisions.

1 . Create a safety culture, not just a safety program. A true safety culture only exists when it’s woven into the fabric of the organization. OSHA defines a safety culture as, “Shared beliefs, practices and attitudes that exist in an establishment. Culture is the atmosphere created by those beliefs, attitudes, etc., which shape behavior.” When this type of program is implemented, costly actions such as at-risk behavior, absenteeism, accidents, and turnover decreases. This naturally results in a higher level of productivity.



OSHA: “Top management must be on board. If they are not, **safety and health will compete against core business issues**, such as production and profitability, a battle that will almost always be lost.”

2. Focus on senior management buy-in. Before a safety culture can be created, members of senior management must truly care about safety at the personal level. “It requires more than press releases and marketing,” says Dennis Truitt, vice president, account management, for PICS Auditing (and a former corporate safety department executive). “Without senior management buy-in, there will be a breakdown in the organization’s efforts to reach safety goals. Employees really need to feel that the organization truly sees safety as a value.”

OSHA states, “Top management must be on board. If they are not, safety and health will compete against core business issues, such as production and profitability, a battle that will almost always be lost.”

One method to getting senior management involved, according to Truitt, is to engage them in some level of safety auditing or evaluation of hazards in the workplace. Examples include, but are not limited to, planned inspections, safety observations, job hazard analysis, and other preventative, pre-loss identification programs. When they actually experience safety in the workplace, they will gain much more personal interest in it.

Richard D. Fulwiler, PhD, CIH, CSHM, president of Technology Leadership Associates, a course director and instructor at the Harvard School of Public Health, and former director of health and safety worldwide for Proctor & Gamble, agrees with the focus on finances. “A lot of senior managements view health and safety as a staff necessity,” he says. “They say, ‘It’s a cost, but we are willing to spend the money to keep our people safe.’”

However, it is incumbent on EHS professionals to do whatever it takes to convince senior management that health and safety is a strategic function in the company in three areas: people, public trust and profit. People, of course, are the employees, and increased injuries equate in increased workers’ compensation and other costs. Public trust relates to the external image: “For example, if you have emissions, explosions, or OSHA citations, you are going to lose public trust, both in the community and with your products on the shelf,” said Fulwiler. In terms of profit, of course, strong positive health and safety results clearly drive the bottom line.

To demonstrate this to management, you have to convert health and safety metrics into business metrics. “For example, you can use an equation, using the company’s profit margin, to convert workers’ compensation costs to sales-equivalent dollars,” said Fulwiler. “If your company has a five percent profit margin, then a \$1,000 injury will end up being a \$20,000 cost.”

3. Hire the right people, and put them in the right jobs. “Nothing will unsettle a safety program like having employees who do not fit into the safety culture,” said Truitt. “These are employees who are not willing to engage in the proper behaviors that are required for a world-class safety program.”

The first step, according to Truitt, is to determine what your needs are. Identify the potential hazards and exposures that employees may face, and then determine if there’s a level of competency and training that goes beyond the applicant’s standard resume, such as craft experience, specific skill sets, formal training, licens-



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— Richard D. Fulwiler, PhD, CIH, CSHM, president of Technology Leadership Associates

ing and accreditation. “Then, once you determine the level and type of expertise required, you can go out and hire the people with that expertise,” Truitt explains.

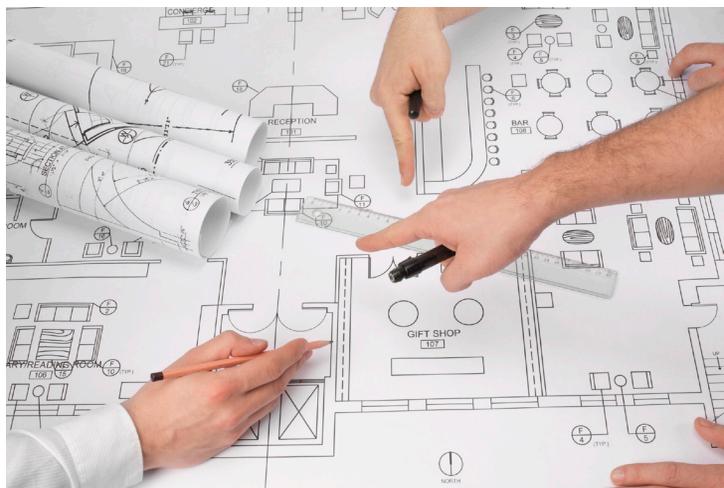
Screening applicants during the hiring phase can be a very effective tool. Creating a partnership with a contractor management service is a useful strategy to help you quickly hire prequalified workers who meet your safety culture.

4. Create a strong contractor/supplier program. It’s one thing to make sure that all of your own employees are committed to safety; it’s another to make sure that visiting employees (those sent onsite by contractors, subcontractors and other suppliers) have the same level of commitment. “Everyone needs to be on the same page, and a collaborative effort needs to exist in order to ensure a safe working environment for all who participate,” says Truitt. That is, unsafe contractors not only put themselves at risk, but can also put your own employees at risk with multi-employer work operations.

“Using outside contractors is one area where a company can have some pretty significant risk, so mitigating it is very important,” says J.A. Rodriguez, Jr., CSP, CEO of Make My Day Strategies, a business consulting firm. When it comes to a contractor safety program, responsibilities should be formalized, written down, communicated and enforced in a standard operating procedure, including a robust prequalification process. “Time invested up-front pays major dividends at the back end,” Rodriguez says.

“One strategy here is to check the contractor’s workers’ compensation experience modification factor/rate,” adds Fulwiler. “This shouldn’t be the sole determinant, but if they have a poor rate, that would be a red flag.”

Truitt suggests taking a deep dive look into the program you currently use for contractor or supplier screening. “If you don’t have an in-house program that’s working, the benefits of utilizing a third-party that has the expertise and resources to do this for you can bring tremendous value to the organization,” he shares.



5. Emphasize inter-departmental collaboration for safety.

Each department, of course, has its own agenda and its own priorities. Typically, the only department whose main agenda and priorities are safety is the EHS department. However, if the entire organization moves to prioritize the safety of its workforce, contractors and other visitors, then each department needs to make this commitment. The EHS department can play an important role in providing the proper guidance and resources across the company.

“All departments need to play an active role in safety,” advises Truitt. “If the EHS department is the only department focused on safety, it will be impossible to create an organization-wide safety culture.” The goal is not to turn everyone into safety professionals, but simply to increase their level of awareness and to truly gain participation.

“Before you can focus on inter-departmental collaboration, the organization as a whole needs a clearly articulated safety vision from senior management, a vision that is understood and accepted throughout the organization,” said Fulwiler. “This is why gaining the support of senior management [point #2 above] is so important. Once the organizational vision is in place, then all of the departments will work to serve this vision.”

6. Create a job hazard analysis program. One of the best ways to determine and establish proper work procedures is to conduct a job hazard analysis. OSHA defines

a job hazard analysis as, “A technique that focuses on job tasks as a way to identify hazards before they occur.” Ideally, after uncontrolled hazards are identified, steps are taken to eliminate or reduce them to an acceptable risk level.

“You want to look at what employees are being exposed to, and what other hazards exist in the workplace,” said Truitt.

In so doing, you can start with a simple approach. “Create one or more teams to go out and identify those hazards,” he added. “You can download any of a number of checklists from the Internet for this purpose. Start with a generic list. Then, over time, you can move to a more detailed list, and add specific hazards by job function or process.”

Besides using the findings of a job hazard analysis to eliminate and prevent hazards in the workplace, the analysis, according to OSHA, “can also be a valuable tool for training new employees in the steps required to perform their jobs safely.”

7. Be persistent and evade complacency. Early efforts to improve safety can sometimes appear to be easy, with results coming quickly as the “low-hanging fruit” is picked. For example, improving from a total recordable incidence rate (TRIR) of 20 to 10 often is not difficult. However, getting from 10 to five, then five to two, etc., becomes incrementally more challenging.





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— Dennis Truitt, vice president, account management, for PICS Auditing

“Once you have arrived at TRIR numbers of less than 0.75, or somewhere in that neighborhood of world-class safety for large organizations in heavy industries, the reductions begin to take on a new set of hard-to-accomplish objectives,” says Truitt. In fact, one spike can turn things around and start the numbers heading back up. As such, it is important to keep the pressure on and not give up when occasional setbacks occur.

Fulwiler explains that it’s important to have a before-the-fact metric of safety performance and an after-the-fact metric. “That is, you need a management system that allows you to measure, in a numeric and quantifiable way, where you are, and where you want to be,” he says. “Once you have a specific number that is your goal, it is difficult to be complacent in reaching that specific goal.”

PERSPECTIVE

Building a world-class safety culture takes time, effort and commitment. And once achieved, it requires constant vigilance.

When the entire workforce is purposefully engaged, and arrangements are made for everyone to become involved in safety—including committees, teams, audits, meetings, evaluations, and training—then awareness and commitment will be built, which leads to cost savings and safety excellence. 



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One Direction: Aligning Management and the Workforce for Safety Engagement



When management and the workforce are aligned and engaged in safety, excellence is on the horizon.



by Richard Fulwiler

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My last few published articles and several of my recent presentations have focused on the importance of transformational leadership—not just in EHS, but also in other important functional areas such as cost, quality and production. As I continue to grow my knowledge in leadership, it's become apparent that the concept of engagement is gaining traction.

As an example, the Harvard Business Review's May 2014 cover story was "Blue Ocean Leadership: How to Engage your Employees and Stop Wasting Everyone's Time." The June issue of HBR included a piece titled "Motivational Tools that Improve Engagement." The opening paragraph in the May HBR cover story reinforced—in a very powerful way—my belief that there's a tremendous opportunity awaiting those who have the skills to engage the workforce.

"It's a sad truth about the workplace: Just 30 percent of employees are actively committed to doing a good job," reads the HBR cover story. "According to Gallup's 2013 'State of the American Workplace' report, 50 percent of employees merely put their time in, while the remaining 20 percent act out their discontent in counterproductive ways."

The Gallup "State of the American Workplace" is a highly respected report. What it says is there's tremendous potential for achieving improved results if organizations can grow the percentage of employees who are actively committed (engaged).



Does safety performance relate to this? Of course it does—as does performance in any important business output, be it cost, production quality or customer service. The opportunity lies in our ability to increase the percentage of engaged employees. But how do we accomplish this?

ENGAGING SENIOR MANAGEMENT

You might recall that one of the failures of the early advocates of behavior-based safety was that they focused on the workers and not on management. Eventually they got it right and included the importance of involving management in the behavior-based safety approach. Engagement is no different: It must start with senior management being willing to become engaged in the safety process.

A case in point: In 2008, Cintas Corp. began a journey toward world-class workplace safety and health. Cintas already was focused on being world-class in

other important business-output areas such as customer service. To the company's credit, Cintas realized that its management style was too transactional and had to become more transformational if it was to achieve this lofty safety objective.

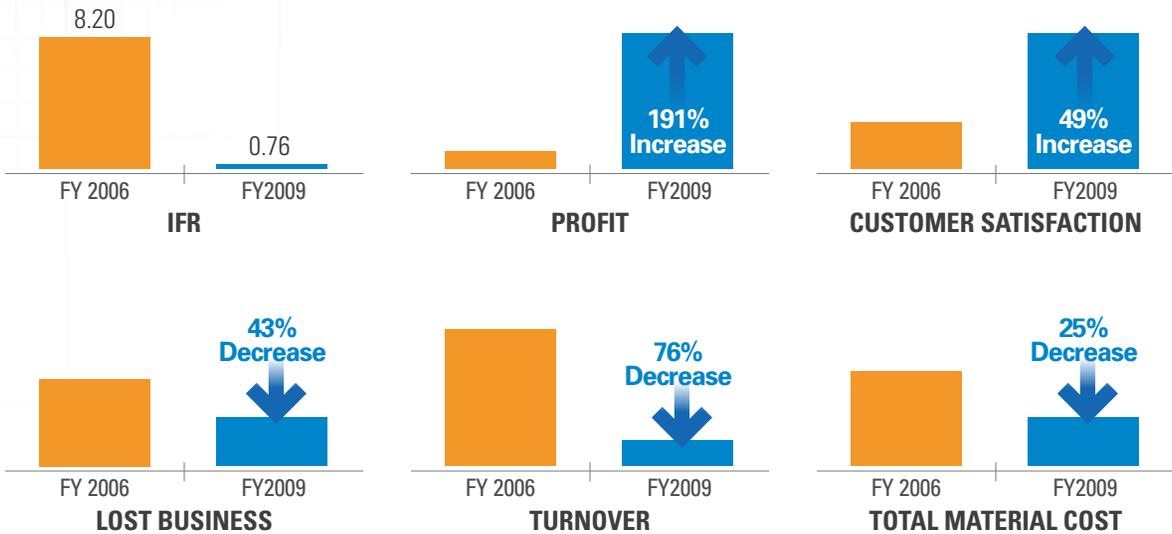
Cintas took its executive committee off site for a 1 ½-day workshop on safety, devoting an entire afternoon to transformational leadership. This was the start of its senior management getting seriously engaged in the safety process. **(See Figure 1)**

In my work with executive committees from other large corporations, I've observed that senior managers tend to be much more transactional than transformational—in other words, focusing on hard-number outputs such as top-line sales and bottom-line profits. This should come as no surprise to anyone. But can a transactional leadership team be expected to truly engage the workforce in anything? No and heck no.



Figure 1: Engagement: It's Not Just About Safety

Figure 1 depicts the results at a Cintas plant three years after a highly transformational general manager took over. Note not only the tenfold improvement in safety results, but also the significant improvement in other key performance indicators such as profit, cost, turnover and customer satisfaction. This is proof-positive that transformational leadership and engaged executives and workers not only will achieve excellence in EHS but also in other critically important business outputs.



“[Drucker’s] concepts turned companies away from treating employees as cogs [in a wheel], persuading management to think of workers as assets and partners—which is how the best companies behave today.”

— Peter Drucker, workforce engagement proponent

TRANSFORMATIONAL ENGAGED EXCELLENCE

The principle of engaging the workforce isn’t new, but the practice of engaging the workforce hasn’t been broadly applied. Peter Drucker was a strong proponent of workforce engagement and transformational leadership, but I’m not sure he ever used either of these terms. The following piece taken from his obituary aptly describes Drucker’s position as it relates to engaging the workforce:

“[Drucker’s] concepts turned companies away from treating employees as cogs [in a wheel], persuading management to think of workers as assets and partners—which is how the best companies behave today.”

What Drucker was saying was that we need to engage the whole worker—in other words, we need to get the worker’s head in the game. Wasn’t this the brilliance behind behavior-based safety? It’s my contention that a senior management team focused on being more transformational not only will get workers’ heads in the game but also their hearts.



CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADER

Remember, the workforce won't become engaged until senior leadership is engaged. It's important to understand the difference between transactional and transformational leadership. Simply stated, a transactional leader focuses mostly on the task or the work, while the transformational leader has a balanced focus on both the work/task and the person doing the work/task.

A TRANSACTIONAL LEADER:

- Maintains a quid pro quo relationship between the worker and leader, frequently relying on disciplinary action.
- Is task-oriented (for example, focusing on regulatory compliance).
- Preserves existing culture, conditions and practices (the status quo).
- Is likely to place more focus on the work than on the worker.

On the other hand, a transformational leader:

- Helps align the worker's values with the leader's values.
- Empowers the worker to engage in the work process—to go beyond the worker's self-interest.
- Is personally engaged with the worker (cares about the worker).
- Maximizes and optimizes the worker's contributions.
- Focuses on both the work and the worker.

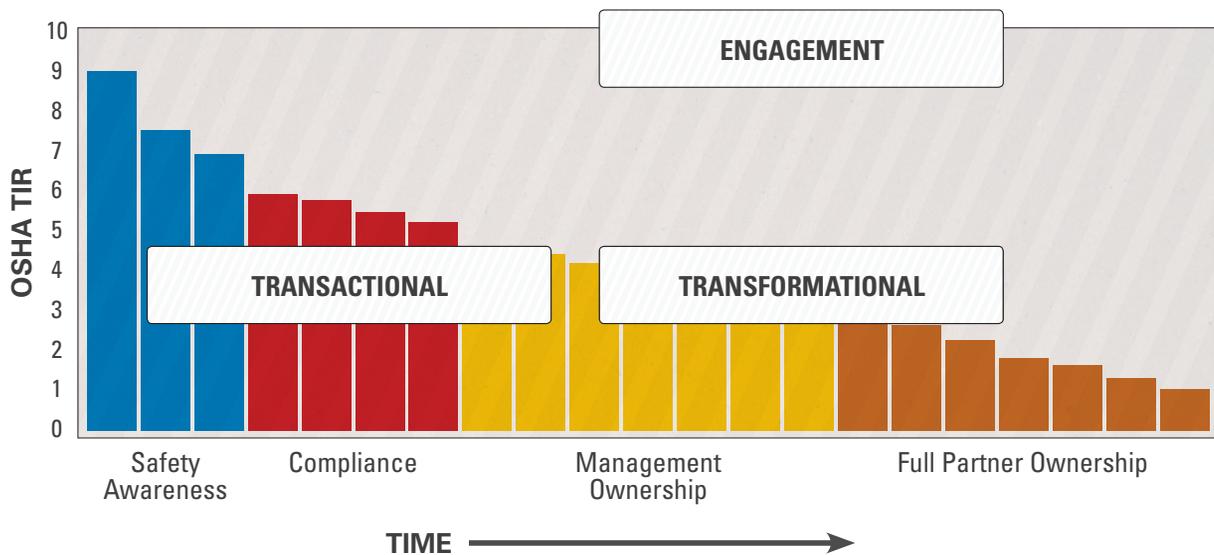
Transactional leadership isn't all bad. Senior leaders need to understand the benefits that can come from achieving a balance that requires them to become more transformational. EHS professionals might have to "coach up" their management on this concept.

Of all the skills that a transformational leader must possess, five are critical: listening, communicating, caring, collegiality and engaging.



Figure 2: Simplified Safety Engagement Model

Figure 2 describes a simplistic but typical journey that an enterprise takes in achieving excellence. The vertical axis is injuries and the horizontal axis is time. Obviously, higher injury rates will occur if the attitude of the enterprise is merely safety awareness but with no real organized approach to safety and no focused ownership. Compliance also is transactional, since it represents a checklist approach. Once senior leaders realize that they own safety, results start getting better than average. When management actually becomes engaged in the process, results will continue to improve. Management engagement is critical to achieving worker engagement. Once management and the workforce are engaged, excellence clearly is on the horizon.



LISTENING

While listening is one of the most important communication skills, most of us have had little formal training in listening.

Keys to listening are:

- Seeking first to understand, then to be understood.
- Listening for meaning and feeling – not just facts.
- Being empathic.
- Hearing the other person out and not interrupting.

COMMUNICATING

Effective communication means expressing the organization's vision or expectations in a way that resonates with employees at all levels. It also means:

- Speaking in the language of the "customer" (the workers).
- Being open to feedback—and even criticism—from subordinates.

- Starting all meetings with safety, to demonstrate its importance.

CARING

Caring—the most important characteristic of a transformational leader—means:

- Demonstrating genuine concern for others in a visible way.
- Being sensitive to the needs of others.
- Being willing to interact with employees at all levels.

BEING COLLEGIAL

Collegiality means demonstrating a sense of equality among others (including subordinates). It also means:

- Interacting with employees in a friendly manner.
- Relating to all levels of employees and making them feel at ease.
- Showing gratitude, sympathy or empathy.



ENGAGING MEANS:

- Demonstrating a personal connection with subordinates.
- Helping subordinates commit to and achieve desired goals.
- Linking the worker's needs with the organization's needs.
- Conveying a sense of worth to subordinates (in other words, showing them that they're not just cogs in a wheel).

CONCLUSION

There are two critical messages. First, if an organization wants to achieve EHS excellence, the workforce must become engaged in the safety process—but this can't happen until senior management becomes engaged. That is the "what to do." But the "how to do it" requires senior management to become more transformational

and less transactional. This is the message that EHS professionals need to "coach up" in their organizations.

EHS professionals need to leverage the fact that an engaged workforce not only will achieve excellence in safety and health but also in other key functional areas. This article, and an article in the June 2011 edition of EHS Today "[Transformational Leadership: The Key to World-Class Safety](#)", can help you get there.

Dr. Richard D. Fulwiler is president of Technology Leadership Associates, a consultancy that specializes in increasing individual effectiveness and improving organizational capability and results. The former director of health and safety worldwide at Procter & Gamble, Fulwiler is a widely published writer, a sought-after speaker and an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. 



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When Organizations Outgrow Their Safety Programs



Whether your organization is growing internally or through mergers or acquisitions, shifting direction or simply experiencing the world-wide change of generations, you might be outgrowing your current safety capacity.



by Terry L. Mathis

This article originally appeared on EHSToday.com January 2015

Many safety programs have become stagnant during a period of relatively good results and have dulled their sense of vulnerability. The need for strategic change in safety is ambushing many organizations in today's climate. The best time to make adjustments is before your current programs create the possibility for catastrophic accidents.

Many organizations have enjoyed the luxury of experienced workforces over the past two or three decades. These well-seasoned workers have developed a keen awareness of workplace dangers and often have developed a culture of looking out for each other. New workers could be introduced into this culture with relatively little onboarding and be assimilated quickly and safely.

Certainly, some bad practices get passed along in such a system, but the good usually outweighs the bad. In such a reality, training and onboarding often atrophy and become ineffective. The outcomes don't point to the deficiencies because the culture prevents the negative consequences of weak formal training by providing good on-the-job training and a support system of experienced fellow workers.

But what happens when the experienced workforce is diluted with too many new hires, or the most experienced workers begin to retire in large numbers? New employees often get thrown into the workplace with inadequate training and weak, or lacking, support systems. Safety professionals find they need to spend much more time in the workplace to correct per-



formance problems. When they can no longer manage critical safety issues with the inexperienced masses, accident rates begin to climb and the safety staff goes into fire-fighting mode reacting to accidents. Accident investigations take an increasingly large percentage of the safety staff's time. Corrective actions also begin to take longer and the remaining time often is confiscated by organizational leaders who begin to question why the failure rate is growing.

Many organizations fail to realize in a timely manner that changing workforces require changing safety efforts. When the realization finally comes, the reaction often is simply to do more rather than to address the problem strategically. New programs are initiated with little regard to how they fit in with existing programs and with few metrics to truly test their effectiveness or efficiency.

This programmatic approach has created a marketplace for safety programs. Almost every consultant and training company can provide something more for organizations to do and price them according to the urgency to improve results. Ironically, most of these programs produce Hawthorne Effect results, which make them look good in the short-term. When an organization adopts a new program and the lagging indicators respond in a timely manner, leaders often declare the problem solved and move on to other priorities. Unfortunately, a programmatic approach to safety almost always fails in the long run.

VISION STATEMENT

The alternative to this approach is to re-think the overall safety strategy. It is ironic that organizations that have a strategic approach to almost every aspect of business don't all have a true safety strategy. Strategy



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It also is critical to define success in terms of performance, not just results. Remember that **“Zero Accidents”** and **“Everyone Goes Home Safe”** are goals and not strategies.

begins with a view of what desired success looks like. Some call this a vision statement.

It is important to envision the organization’s personal best rather than some abstract view of perfection. Many vision statements are so perfectionistic they actually demotivate workers. It also is critical to define success in terms of performance, not just results. Remember that “Zero Accidents” and “Everyone Goes Home Safe” are goals and not strategies. What performance will produce those results, and how can you repeat it next year?

Once strategic thinking begins, old paradigms and heritage practices don’t necessarily dominate the approach to success. Strategic thinking opens new possibilities that programmatic thinking tends to ignore. Who should set the safety strategy? Who should make it happen in the workplace? What training will be necessary? What criteria should be used to screen candidates for new positions? What communication will create focus? What metrics will give workers motivational insight into successful performance? What kind of safety leadership and management is needed, and should



Many argue that assessments should precede strategy development, but often an assessment identifies problem areas, causing the strategy sessions to digress into problem-solving sessions (gap closure) rather than true strategy development.

it be embedded into the organization or be a separate, stand-alone department? What kind of safety culture will sustain the desired performance long-term? What kind of engagement opportunities do workers need to form this desired culture?

Once a strategy begins to emerge, it may be necessary to assess the current status of the safety culture and determine what factors influence it. Many argue that assessments should precede strategy development, but often an assessment identifies problem areas, causing the strategy sessions to digress into problem-solving sessions (gap closure) rather than true strategy development. When strategy comes first, it more often defines success rather than just avoids failure. Such strategies tend to be proactive and preventative, rather than simply reactionary.

Once the strategy is determined and the current status assessed, it may be time to look for programs that were avoided earlier. Now programs can be fit into the strategic framework rather than simply aiming new efforts at old problems. Many organizations find that refining existing programs is more effective than adopting new ones. Always remember to manage the perception of change and not overwhelm the workforce. A modification of an existing program can

appear less daunting than starting over with something new. Even new programs can be postured as the next logical step in a progression rather than a new start from a dead end.

Leaders always should be in touch with the evolution of their organizations and realize changes in the workforce necessitate changes in safety efforts. Leaders who stay in touch and avoid the “more is better” mentality tend to think about safety strategically. Strategy is the purview of leaders and they should take the lead in safety, as they do in any key priority or value in the organization. Such strategies utilize help from safety professionals without delegating safety entirely.

Terry L. Mathis, the coauthor of STEPS to Safety Culture Excellence and founder and CEO of ProAct Safety, was named one of “The 50 People Who Most Influenced EHS” for the third consecutive time in 2013 by EHS Today. As an international expert and safety culture practitioner, he has worked with hundreds of organizations customizing innovative approaches to achieve and sustain safety culture excellence. He can be reached at 800-395-1347 or info@proactsafety.com.



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RESOURCES



Avetta Corporate Overview:
The Global Leader in Supply Chain Risk Management



Case Study: Huntsman Corporation Reduces U.S. Contractor TRIR by 74% with Avetta



Infographic: Is your company a world class safety organization? (Survey results of over 550+ respondents)



White Paper: Four Cornerstones of Successful Supply Chain Risk Management



Case Study: Range Resources Engages Avetta to Identify and Mitigate Contractor Risk



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