

GUIDANCE FOR THE BEGINNING OHS PROFESSIONAL

SAFETY REFLECTIONS
BY
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Introduction

In nearly 4 decades of involvement in field, corporate, project and consultant OHS roles I have had the opportunity to learn a variety of things. In this publication I have outlined generally 1-2 page thoughts on safety and safety aligned topics, with the aim of providing some brief guidance to the newly developing OHS professional. I believe I cover a fair bit of relevant ground. Whilst there is a smattering of theory in the following, most is based on practical experience. A strong message is that to be effective in OHS you need competency from other areas, as well as your OHS competencies.

Why read this paper? What will I learn? What is in it for me?

This paper will expose you to the sort of learning about OHS you will be unlikely to find in most tertiary OHS qualifications. It is focused on the real world not theory.

Why have OHS?

The first fatality I was associated with occurred over 30 years ago to a young, vivacious, pleasant female office employee at a mine site. I was the first on the scene and comforted her as she drifted in and out of consciousness. She died the next day, such a waste!

Since then I have assisted my employers manage the aftermath of 12 fatalities and 2 other incidences of permanently life altering personal damage.

There are many reasons to have OHS-

- ✓ Sure we want to obey the legislation and keep the regulators off our back
- ✓ Sure we want to have a good company and industry reputation to attract employees
- ✓ Sure we want to reduce safety related industrial disputation
- ✓ Sure we want to reduce the financial costs of "accidents"
- ✓ Sure we want work to be a pleasant place to be
- ✓ Sure we want a highly skilled workforce

As an OHS professional I have had to deal with the emotional trauma of life altering personal damage and interacted with loved ones and co-workers. For me the prime reason to have OHS is to-
REDUCE PERMANENTLY LIFE ALTERING PERSONAL DAMAGE

This is referred to as Class 1 personal damage and can be fatal and non-fatal. Whilst we rarely get to hear about it the impact of non-fatal class 1 damage is much higher than fatal class 1 damage I would be the first to say there is a lot of bull-dust associated with implementation of safety initiatives. In my time in safety I have seen companies spend tremendous amounts of time, effort and money on dubious safety programs and get little return for their investment.

The challenge is to design your safety programs so they meet the specific, identified needs of your organization.

Discussion on a Canadian safety forum came to the conclusion that you would be lucky to prevent 20% of your "accidents" if all you did was comply with legislation

I think one of my ex-managers said it well when he said "If you cannot manage safety you cannot manage"

Note

My attempt to give advice on how to achieve my objective can be found in the e-book Safety Management Systems under articles on ohschange.com.au

Geoff McDonald

Geoff has been my coach, mentor, guide and adviser on OHS for in excess of 35 years and is one of the very few consultants on the safety scene who inspire much confidence in me. The following are examples of material I have written guided by Geoff.

Safety Myths

One important factor that influences how OHS is managed is the attitudes and pre-conceptions of those leading the charge. This paper explores beliefs, philosophies, concepts and attitudes and suggests some common ideas may be incorrect or unhelpful, that is they may be myths and misconceptions.

People cause accidents

We would not suggest that people are not essential in personal damage occurrences (Accidents) but the people cause accidents myth and misconception is often used as an excuse for not carrying out positive action. What often happens is we blame the person and forget about making positive changes to the machine and the environment. There are few occasions when it is appropriate to blame the person for their past actions, this is only appropriate when the blame leads to change in the future.

The people cause accidents philosophy has been reinforced in a number of ways over the years.

- Heinrich-Although this belief has been part of our culture for centuries, it received official sanction in the writings of Heinrich, widely held to be the father of the industrial safety movement in the 1930's.
- His domino theory whereby unsafe acts, unsafe conditions, errors and hazards combine to produce incidents has tended to focus on the person to blame and has been a serious impediment to meaningful progress.
- Legal system-This reflects the belief that people cause accidents.
- Insurance industry-Closely tied in to the legal system, seeks to identify some person to blame and pursue through legal channels for any claim.
- News media-Media scream driver error in motor vehicle incidents; they scream pilot error in aviation incidents without taking account of the other multitude of essential factors.
- Published studies-Many published studies will have you believe 90% of accidents are caused by human error. The reality is all personal damage occurrences will have people essential factors and machine and environment essential factors.

The main aim of safety activities is to prevent accidents

Certainly safety activities aim to prevent personal damage occurrences. However we must take one step further by also seeking to minimise and control damage. A classic example being the wearing of seat belts and fitting R.O.P.S. to tractors.

Look after the pence and the pounds will look after themselves

There is a belief in safety that if you bring controls to bear on all minor injuries then the Lost Time Injuries will look after themselves. This belief has mis-directed effort with the result that inordinate effort is directed at minor incidents that have little potential for more serious damage. Certainly we should prevent minor incidents but remember to concentrate our efforts where we get the best results. The Pareto Effect says 20% of incidents will give 80% of damage. This 20% must be identified and concentrated upon. In Managing Major Hazards Professor Andrew Hopkins outlines how a focus on Lost Time Injuries led to insufficient emphasis on high risk events. Papers are emerging questioning the wisdom of Zero Harm approaches to safety.

It cannot happen to me

There is a need for each and everyone of us to subscribe to this theory, for the sake of our own psychological well-being and to be able to cope with situations outside our control. This belief is often no more than an excuse for taking no action. Often you will wonder why the silly bugger did what they did, sometimes it is because of this belief.

Punishing wrongdoers

I am not saying we should not punish people who do the wrong thing in safety. I am saying that the fact that we do punish wrongdoers will often lead to highly imaginative efforts to avoid punishment and thus make things harder. The history of the safety movement records numerous cases of punishing the wrongdoers not being effective. We should seriously consider the full range of options rather than making hasty decisions to punish the wrongdoers.

W.A.S.P. ethic

This work ethic had its origins in the great religious upheaval known at the Reformation. The ethics emphasis is just reward for effort, conversely people who are hurt in accidents are receiving their just reward for lack of effort. The W.A.S.P. may sidetrack our prevention efforts.

Displacement activities

A displacement activity is something we do, something we put a lot of energy into but when we examine it closely there is no valid reason for doing it. The industrial safety movement reeks of poorly considered displacement activities often marketed by smooth consultants.

Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate is a valid and reliable measure of safety performance

I have personal experience with a company that aggressively drove down L.T.I.F.R. to a fraction of its original rate in a space of about 2 years yet killed 11 people in one incident.

LTIFR

The Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate predominates discussions about safety performance. How can a company be proud of a decrease of L.T.I.F.R. from 60 to 10 if there have been 2 fatalities and 1 case of paraplegia amongst the lost time injuries? The L.T.I.F.R. trivialises serious personal damage and is a totally inappropriate measure of safety performance.(Refer to the paper on this topic under articles on ohschange.com.au)

Personal Damage Occurrence Investigation Models

I have been exposed to a number of investigation models-Root cause analysis, Tripod, I.C.A.M., Tap Root and A.R.T.T. Of the above the author has found A.R.T.T. (Analysis Reference Tree Trunk) the most useful. This method was developed by Brisbane OHS consultant, Geoff McDonald.

Essentially the personal damage occurrence is represented by a tree-trunk lying on the ground, at the end of the tree-trunk you have Person elements, Machine elements and Environment elements, along the length of the tree-trunk you have 6 time zones and the annular or growth rings of the tree represent a number of Ergonomic elements. Instead of looking for “causes” you look for “essential factors” (An essential factor is one without which the final personal damage could not have occurred) There are good reasons why the term “cause” is not used. The idea is to look for essential factors where the various categories of the model above intersect.

The model is very easy to use and usually at least 30 essential factors will be found in each personal damage occurrence. The author hears good reports on training in this technique conducted by Intersafe.

American author Ted Ferry has written publications that provide practical, how to advice on this topic. Readers may find the advice on an investigation kit in Accident Investigation on ohschange.com.au of benefit.

Analysis of “Accident” experience

Many organisations analyse their “Accident” experience in the hope of gaining insight into how to prevent their problems. Most organisations will not have sufficient serious “Accident” experience to make statistically significant determinations.

1. Damage to people at work has a number of adverse outcomes:-
 - Financial loss to employer, worker and community
 - Pain and suffering
 - Dislocation of lives
 - Permanence of death
2. Damage to people from work falls naturally into one of three Classes.
 - **Class I damage** permanently alters the person’s life and subdivides into
 - fatal
 - non fatal
 - **Class II damage** temporarily alters the person’s life
 - **Class III damage** temporarily inconveniences the person’s life (Geoff McDonald & Associates)

Taxonomy

This is an incredibly simple technique that it is rare to find used. Essentially a taxonomy is a collection of like. The most well known taxonomy is the phylum of plants, their botanical names. Awhile back I was associated with a taxonomy of the more significant personal damage occurrences in the Qld mining industry which I thought was particularly effective in setting priorities for the

industry. It is important to do the taxonomy on an industry basis as it is unlikely even the big companies will have enough of the more serious events to be able to develop statistically significant determinations.

The Qld mining industry has a standard personal damage occurrence report form that is sent to the inspectorate. The hard copies of the forms were obtained and sorted into like, ie the spinal column damages caused by driving a haul truck were put together ,the spinal column damage caused by lifting gas cylinders were put together, the eye injuries caused by grinding were put together and so on. The personal damage occurrences were then examined for their frequency, severity and the essential factors (An essential factor is one without which the final damage could not have occurred) This process gives insight into where your principal problems are occurring and guides preventative action.

In these days of computerised data systems I still feel it is necessary to go back to the original hard copy or a scanned in copy.

Examination of personal damage occurrences on an industry basis can provide meaningful insight into your safety problems.

Access to earthmoving equipment

A highly practical safety project in the early 1990's was the Access to Earthmoving Equipment project. Work required included:

- Carrying out a literature review;
- Thorough statistical analysis of company accident data
- Developing a check-list to assess access systems;
- Field assessment of access systems
- Discussing access requirements with maintenance and operational personnel;
- Designing and installing prototype access modifications;
- Assessing the adequacy of the prototype modifications;
- Developing access purchasing specifications and maintenance guidelines; and
- Providing written guidance on desired characteristics of access systems.
- Presenting to industry forums in Qld. W.A. & N.S.W.

Through the employer association we successfully applied for Federal Government funding to extend the original research work by further research by an ergonomist / mechanical engineer. Thorough statistical analysis of Qld mining industry accident data was the starting point. This work provided significant input into the writing of an Australian Standard for "Earthmoving Equipment Access" and subsequently much earthmoving equipment in open-cut Australian mines now have hydraulically operated access arrangements.

The focus of this work was the large earthmoving equipment used in open-cut mining but the lessons are equally applicable to smaller earthmoving equipment and the back of trucks. This research developed an industry manufacturing and developing earthmoving equipment access systems. With the passage of time this work is not well known in the mining industry nowadays, whilst the work has significant application outside the mining industry few will be aware of it. I can supply further information if necessary, fgrobotham@gmail.com

Geoff was a driving force in this work.

Critical Incident Recall

Many organisations will tell you they report near misses or critical incidents. My advice is unless you have organised processes in place to surface near misses or critical incidents you will only hear about a fraction of them.

Critical incident recall is an awesome technique particularly suited to high risk environments. The technique will not work unless there is a climate of trust created between management and workers. Communications must be open & honest and managers and supervisors must be prepared to put up with a lot of criticism and not react defensively. In the interests of getting to the truth there must be no disciplinary actions. The senior department manager must be prepared to put his reputation on the line. The potential for some to push industrial issues is high with this technique, open & honest communication and a determination to improve will defuse this.

Neither management or workers will be prepared to commit to the work required in this technique unless there is a general realisation that problems exist.

What was done

All department members attended a short learning session where the Person, Machine, Environment concepts were explained. If I was to do this again I would include a case study of a complex class 1 personal damage occurrence to bring out the principles. The process they would go through was explained.

Some department members were trained as critical incident participant observers and observed what was happening in the workplace, some department members were trained as critical incident interviewers and interviewed their workmates. It was essential that those chosen for these tasks were trusted by the workforce. The identified critical incidents were communicated to management. It was planned to let the above process go for 6 months but after a short period of time the frequency and severity of the critical incidents set the alarm bells ringing.

Based on the identified critical incidents a questionnaire was developed and all department members were asked to complete it in a series of meetings.

Responses to the questionnaire were collated and displayed on histograms

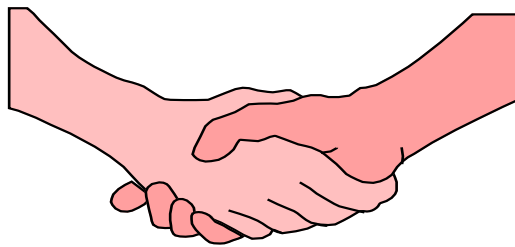
In what was a very brave move considering the industrial climate the senior department manager led a series of meetings with the workforce where he displayed the histograms and asked for feedback on reasons why the responses were the way they were. The manager was advised that no matter how severe the criticism he was not to react defensively. In these circumstances if a senior person is criticised severely you will usually find someone in the work group will come to his rescue if he is being fair dinkum, if that does not happen the facilitator can come to his rescue.

Changes that occurred included upgrading of diagrams & plans, purchase of new high voltage testing equipment, better understanding of some test equipment, training, improved maintenance, improved procedures, changes to isolation procedures and improved practice. An environment of open and honest communication also developed.

(Refer to the paper Practical Application of the Critical Incident Recall Technique on ohschange.com.au Geoff was a driving force in this work

INITIATING CHANGE

- When initiating change remember “People support what they create”



Challenging the status quo is fun and much better than putting up with fools and mediocrity, occasionally this really gets you in the poop. Do not let this deter you, most of the time you will have a win

Win-Win is bull dust, you have to win and the other bloke has to lose, preferably big time, this is the only way people will take you seriously. Any other approach will be seen as a sign of weakness by some of your opponents and it will be used against you to your detriment

Within the limits of the above be respectful and caring of others

Learn the skills of reflective listening and appropriate self-disclosure, helps with interpersonal relationships

Look after your team and the little people because you are stuffed without them

If he / she deserves it, it does not hurt to do things to make your boss look good

When communicating change use the supervisor, use face to face communications and frame messages relevant to the work environment of the person receiving the message. Road shows by senior management discussing change are often perceived as a bit of a wank by the workers

Have a well developed bull-dust detector

While it is tempting to be a bit of a bull-dust artist you have to be very, very good at it and have a fantastic memory or you will be found out eventually and lose all credibility, much easier to simply tell the truth

It is preferable that people like you but this will not always happen so do not worry about this too much, be concerned however if they do not respect you.

Do not take yourself too seriously and enjoy what you do

Never reveal your true bottom line in negotiations

If you want to understand how an organisation functions talk to the workers, the more senior people become in organisations the more removed from the reality of how the organisation operates they become

Celebrate success

Understand people will lie to you, ask for the solid evidence

Try to be uncomplicated and succinct in everything you do. Limit general correspondence to a maximum of 2 pages. Limit the size of major reports, busy people do not have the time to write long correspondence and busy people do not have the time to read it.

Admit your mistakes and fix them publically. Be graceful when others admit mistakes, this will give a return with time

Not everybody will be happy with your decisions, that is life

Integrity is everything

If you have to tell people you are in charge, you are not

Determination-Never give-up!

You cannot succeed unless you know your goals, you cannot succeed and know you have arrived without goals. Planning increases your chances of achieving the goals. If you do not take action you will never attain anything. Direction and purpose are two of the most vital factors that you must have in your life if you are going to be successful.

Do not procrastinate

Successful people are usually positive people. They think about what they want and are optimistic, they expect the best and they expect to win. Faced with problems and obstacle, the positive minded person will look for solutions and a way forward. The negative person will spend so much time whingeing they never move forward. We chose in life. The one thing that can bring success or failure in our lives is our attitude.

A handy thing to remember is that no matter how bleak things look there will always be someone worse off.

See every challenge and responsibility as an opportunity to sell yourself.
Be a life-long learner in many fields.

“When reading your correspondence the reader must say “Wow” in the first third of the page”

“When listening to your presentation the listener must say “Wow” within the first 3 minutes”

Get damn good at what you do through practice and focus, give and receive regular feedback.

Push through your difficulties.

Serve others something of value. Whatever you do must be based on a needs analysis.

Use personal damage occurrences, not emotion, to guide your preventative efforts. Taxonomies of your industry personal damage occurrences provide better guidance than enterprise experience.

Persist through failure.

Remember your example affects the behaviour of others.

Never be late, start & finish on time.

When initiating change remember "People support what they create" Initiating change is difficult at the best of times, if you do not involve those affected by the change in the change process it is unlikely to work.

Remember the 7 P rule - Prior Planning and Preparation Prevents Piss-Poor Performance.

It is often the relationships you build not your technical skills that determine success.

Be squeaky clean in whatever you do or you will be found out, ask Bill Clinton .

Network actively both in business and personal life, people prefer to deal with people they know.

Whatever you do ask yourself "How will this work in the middle of the night when it is pouring down rain?" Use "real world" approaches not theory alone.

Do not complain.

Do not engage with idiots, they just drag you down to their level

Do not criticise others, compliment instead when you really mean it.

Do not make excuses, accept 100% responsibility for everything that happens to you.

Use humour in your interactions, no-one likes a grouch. Learn how to use humour

Grab the opportunity to speak publically about your passion whenever you can. Learn how to speak well. Influencing others, but particularly your peers, can be very satisfying. Avoid lecture style presentations and build activities for your audience into the presentation. Refer to the papers "*Adult Learning Principles and Process*" and "*How to give an unforgettable presentation*" on ohschange.com.au for practical tips.

Read up on written communications, oral communications, attentive listening, interpersonal skills (probably the most important of all), team-building, personal excellence, leadership, project management, change management and time management and practice improving your skills.

Remember the number one job of a leader is to transmit and embed high value standards. Learn about and apply a continuous improvement philosophy.

Plan ahead and the unexpected will not cause an emergency, always have a contingency approach. Coach / mentor / guide / advise the inexperienced, this is the way life-long friendships are built. Try to get your own mentor.

Wherever possible use on the job learning to compliment theory.

Beware of the person who can make pig poo, look, taste, smell & feel like strawberry jam

Strategic approaches are important but make sure you spend enough time in the field that you do not lose contact with the everyday reality of how the business is managed

Always think about “What is in it for me” from the perspective of others you are trying to influence
Identify and separate customer needs from wants

Use Action and Experiential learning for adults that promotes critical reflection

Get some runs on the board quickly

Do what gives you the biggest bang for your buck

Keep promises

Give 100% support to your team all the time, help them with mistakes and acknowledge good work

Minimise the bureaucracy and bull-dust

Project teams with defined deliverables, timelines and milestones can be a great way to drive change

Carefully define the scope of any project you take on

COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE in a way that inspires

Force-Field Analysis is a great way to start off any project

Use the Pareto Principle to maximise the effectiveness of what you do

Passive countermeasures (that do not rely on action by the human being) are preferred to Active countermeasures

Give something for nothing

Differentiate yourself from the others doing similar things

Knowledge of the customer is essential

Say thank you to customers

Show the customer how the product will benefit them

Keep in contact with old customers much easier to sell to than getting new customers

Always treat the customer like a King or Queen-If you do not your competitors will

People buy benefits but want to know features

Word of mouth from satisfied customers is the best advertising, if they are happy they may tell one person, if they are not they will tell 20

Market on value not price, saving the customer time will always be valued

Your family and your health should always take precedence.

Have a pet and go for walks / camping in the bush and on the beach.

Give up the smokes and the fast food and drink the grog sparingly.

It does no harm to do something silly every now and again, relax and generally chill out.

Get away from the television and read.

Laurie Lawrence says "Excellence is no accident"

General Norman Schwarzkopf says "Failures in leadership are invariably failures in character, not competence"

A mate of mine says "The trouble with business is some professionals engage in acts of public masturbation"

To sum up-FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION

Background to OHS

The 10 most important things in a robust safety management system

1. Have well developed internal standards of OHS excellence.
2. Define what excellence in implementation of the standards will look like.
3. Train everyone in the above.
4. Have thorough audits of implementation of the standards led by senior managers.
5. Comply with statute law as a minimum.
6. Ensure you have highly effective OHS personnel, often difficult to achieve.
7. Ensure highly effective safety leadership is driven from the top of the organisation.
8. Keep safety communications succinct and targeted at the needs of the receiver, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE.
9. Involve the relevant stakeholders in the development of an OHS plan truly applicable to your needs.
10. Use industry accident experience, not just your enterprise accident experience to guide action. Have a focus on Class 1 personal damage.

Behaviour-Based Safety

Many will have you believe around 90% or more of accidents are caused by human behavior. I have written elsewhere questioning this assertion, even if it were true it is unhelpful.

My view is that there are a number of proponents of B.B.S. who make outlandish claims about the success of the technique without rigorous research studies to back up their assertions. Some of the arguments for the technique get emotive.

I was associated with 4 B.B.S. implementations that ended up being fizzers. With the first one the process failed because one of the things the workers were asked to do was observe and report on their mates behaviors. Australians do not “dob” in their mates and the process just did not work.

The other 3 implementations were done in the same department at 3 different sites in the one company and for 6 months or so worked very well and a lot was achieved. At all 3 sites after 6 months or so the process was abandoned because both workers and management thought it was too much like hard work and there was not sufficient return for the effort.

My view is that you have to have good safety systems and engineering controls in place before you consider introducing B.B.S. There are some safety professionals whose opinion I respect highly who tell me they have had good success with Dupont B.B.S. systems.

I would welcome feedback from people who have had success with BBS

Role of the safety professional

It is interesting to read job advertisements and see what employers expect of OHS personnel. Statements are often made that the OHS person is to be responsible for implementing and managing OHS. Of course this flies in the face of management obligations at both common and statute law.

Short sighted companies think they employ safety people and these people will look after safety. The more progressive companies often do not have many dedicated OHS personnel, management and supervisors are so well trained and effective in safety that few dedicated safety personnel are required. Safety personnel should report to the senior officer so the function has some chance of being perceived as being of importance. The danger when you have too many safety people is that line management gets the safety people to manage safety not themselves. Safety is a line management function and safety personnel should be seen as specialist adviser.

In their keenness many inexperienced safety personnel get over involved in doing safety and take the responsibility away from supervision and management. By all means assist them to do their safety job but do not do it for them.

I recall visiting one organization that won a prestigious industry safety award. They had no safety staff, no health & safety representatives and no safety committee. When questioned, the Managing Director said all employees are our safety officers, all employees are our health and safety representatives and all employees are on the safety committee. They invested considerably in training all employees in safety, a similar approach was taken in other functions.

The organization was the benchmark for the industry in many management aspects, interestingly they went broke after about 5 years operation.

I find it difficult to think an OHS person can be effective if he is not a bit of a stirrer and questioner of the status quo. Always research issues thoroughly so you are sure of your facts and be prepared to stand your ground. There will be times when unreasonable demands are made for you to compromise your safety principles.

Safety incentives

For the 20 years I was in the mining industry we had a variety of safety incentives. There were stubby coolers, belt buckles, caps, jackets, sports bags and so on. Awards were given for various periods without a lost time accident, often a more valuable prize was given for greater periods without a lost time accident.

At one job I gave out stickers for 1,2,3, years etc without a lost time accident. Between ordering different stickers for each year, keeping track of who was due for a sticker, placating those who could not get a sticker because they had had an accident and supplying extra stickers for peoples collections it sucked up a lot of time

One of the things we found was OHS people using the vagaries of the lost time accident classification system to not count compensable injuries as lost time. We also found the employees came to expect the award as just another perk of employment that had no relationship to safety. There were occasions when employees were injured due to management failures and they argued they should still get the award.

Inter-mine safety competitions saw amazingly innovative ways of not counting accidents and generally fudging the figures.

These things are also quite painful to administer. The question was also raised about why people should need / deserve an award for working safely. The costs were substantial and some people argued the money could be better spent stopping personal damage occurrences. At the end of the

day I believe safety incentives are a distraction and have no place in a safety program. There is plenty of literature to support this view.

Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate

The Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate is the principal measure of safety performance in many companies in Australia. The definition of L.T.I.F.R. is the number of Lost Time Injuries multiplied by 1 million divided by the number of man hours worked in the reporting period

A Lost Time Injury is a work injury or disease where the injured party has at least 1 complete day or shift off work. Note that a fatality and a cut where a person has 1 complete day off work count the same in Lost Time Injury terms.

The following are my reasons why the L.T.I.F.R. impedes progress in safety.

Some safety people cheat like hell with their L.T.I.F.R. statistics encouraged by managers with an eye to keep their key performance indicators looking good. The more the pressure to keep K.P.I.'s looking good the more creative the accounting.

Safety people spend inordinate periods of time obtaining rulings on what to count and how to count it from bodies such as the Australian Standards Association. Often answers obtained are imprecise and the decisions are left to personal opinion

Most measures in management are of achievements rather than failures such as the number of Lost Time Accidents. There is a ground swell in the safety movement talking about Positive Performance Measures in safety It is relatively simple to develop measures of what you are doing right in safety as opposed to using outcome measures such as L.T.I.F.R.

I have personal experience with a company that aggressively drove down L.T.I.F.R. to a fraction of its original rate in a space of about 2 years yet killed 11 people in one incident.

The Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate predominates discussions about safety performance. How can a company be proud of a decrease of L.T.I.F.R. from 60 to 10 if there have been 2 fatalities and 1 case of paraplegia amongst the lost time injuries? The L.T.I.F.R. trivialises serious personal damage and is a totally inappropriate measure of safety performance.

All organisations have limited resources to devote to safety, it seems more efficient to prevent one incident resulting in paraplegia than to prevent 20 incidents where people have a couple of days off work (some will say this comment is **heresy**)

Somewhere in the push to reduce L.T.I.'s, reduce the L.T.I.F.R. and consequently achieve good ratings in safety programme audits the focus on serious personal damage tends to be lost.

Reducing the L.T.I.F.R. is as much about introducing rehabilitation programmes and making the place an enjoyable place to work as it is about reduction of personal damage.

For further information refer to the L.T.I.F.R. paper on ohschange.com

Alternatives to the hierarchy of controls

The traditional wisdom when developing hazard controls is to use the Hierarchy of Controls. The author's experience is that a better result will be achieved by using either Haddon's 10 Countermeasures or the A.C.I.R.L. 9 Box Model. The main advantage of these approaches is that it expands your options for control

Hazard Control Model

Various hazard control strategies and models have been developed by safety professionals over the years. One of the most effective but still easiest to apply is that devised by American researcher Bill Haddon

Haddon's model for hazard control is as follows:

Countermeasure 1	Prevent the marshalling of the form of energy in the first place. eg. Ripping seams - instead of blasting, substitution of radiation bin level sources with ultra-sonic level detectors, using water based cleaners rather than flammable solvents.
Countermeasure 2	Reduce the amount of energy marshalled. eg. Radiation – gauge source strength, explosive store licence requirements, control number of gas cylinders in an area
Countermeasure 3	Prevent the release of the energy. eg. handrails on work stations, isolating procedures, most interlock systems
Countermeasure 4	Modifying the rate or distribution of energy when it is released. eg. slope of ramps, frangible plugs in gas bottles, seat belts.
Countermeasure 5	Separate in space or time the energy being released from the susceptible person or structure. eg. minimum heights for powerlines, divided roads, blasting fuse.
Countermeasure 6	Interpose a material barrier to stop energy or to attenuate to acceptable levels. eg. electrical insulation, personal protective equipment, machinery guards, crash barriers
Countermeasure 7	Modify the contact surface by rounding or softening to minimise damage when energy contacts susceptible body. eg. round edges on furniture, building bumper bars, padded dashboards in cars.
Countermeasure 8	Strengthen the structure living or non-living that would otherwise be damaged by the energy exchange. eg. earthquake and fire resistant buildings, weightlifting.
Countermeasure 9	To move rapidly to detect and evaluate damage and to counter its continuation and extension. eg. sprinkler systems, emergency medical care, alarm systems of many types.
Countermeasure 10	Stabilisation of damage – long term rehabilitative and repair measure.

	eg. clean-up procedures, spill disposal, physiotherapy
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Note

Generally the larger the amounts of energy involved in relation to the resistance of the structures at risk, the earlier in the countermeasure sequence must the strategy be selected. In many situations where preventative measures are being considered the application of more than one countermeasure may be appropriate.

Countermeasures may be 'passive' in that they require no action on the part of persons, or 'active' in the sense that they require some action or co-operation on the part of the persons, perhaps in association with a design related countermeasure (eg. seatbelts).

Passive' countermeasures tend to be more reliable in the long term. A short term solution to an immediate problem may require the adoption of an 'active' countermeasure eg. toolbox sessions on replacing guards over a mechanical hazard, the long term or 'passive' countermeasure might be the fitting of interlocks to the guard so that power is off when the guard is off.

Further reading

Haddon, W *'On the escape of tigers an ecologic note – strategy options in reducing losses in energy damaged people and property'* Technology Review Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 72;7, 44-53, 1970.

A.C.I.R.L. 9 Box Model

This model says that to have effective control one must have at least one control in each of the boxes. Experience in industry suggests many organizations have many Prevention controls and many Contingency controls (nice trucks with flashing red lights, first-aid kits, trained first-aiders etc) but that they are poor at Monitoring the effectiveness of these controls

	Prevention	Monitoring	Contingency
Eqpt / Engineering			
Procedures			
Skills/Competencies			

Young worker safety

Working with young people brings unique safety challenges to the OHS professional, supervisors and managers. Workers 15-24 have a 75% greater chance of being killed on the job, often their accidents happen in the first 2 weeks of employment. Work in construction, using motor vehicles and moving machinery is particularly hazardous to young people.

They are still developing physically and mentally, lack experience and are unfamiliar with the demands of work. They usually will not speak up and question what they are asked to do. They are generally unsure of their OHS rights and responsibilities. Young workers can find it difficult to fully grasp risks so they may make impulsive decisions. For some young people giving them something physical and / or with their hands to do is a better option than activities that require a lot of thought or are otherwise theoretical.

Although the brain reaches its full adult weight by the age of 21, it continues to develop for several years. In fact, a study done by the National Institutes of Health found that the region of brain that inhibits risky behavior does not fully form until age 25. This is the final stage of brain development.

The sleep hormone melatonin is produced later at night in young people making it harder to wind down at night and results in a struggle to wake up in the morning.

Adolescent behaviour can be associated with risk taking and recklessness. Some young workers will want to impress and this can lead to risky behaviour. Young males are more prone to make aggressive responses to a range of situations. Many young people are unsure of themselves and will not reveal their inner selves in group situations, working one on one with them can be productive however. They will often not reveal their uncertainty about instructions they have been given. Some younger workers are more prone to fatigue than older workers. Alcohol and / or drugs can be a factor.

An important message is to advise them to ask their supervisor if they are unsure of any aspect of the work they are asked to do. If they think the work is hazardous refer to the supervisor and refuse to do it if there is no satisfactory conclusion. They need to know they should not get in trouble for not doing hazardous work.

Get them to write down instructions or use a documented safe working procedure.

Be very specific in your instructions to young people.

Induction training and general training needs special emphasis for young people, they will not understand common workplace terms and equipment, detailed checks for understanding are necessary.

Supervision of young people also requires special emphasis. One must allocate appropriate tasks in line with their experience.

Performance feedback and using positive adult role models is particularly important

Allocating a coach or mentor to work with them can be productive.

Source-Safework Victoria, Workcover N.S.W.

In my research to write the above I found it difficult to obtain good source material, I would appreciate it if others could advise relevant references.

Zero harm

Many companies in Australia will proudly tell you they have a Zero Harm approach to OHS. My understanding, from admittedly not widespread research, is that Zero Harm approaches are not widespread in other countries. I am told the Canadians tried it and abandoned it.

A small number of companies in Australia have been doing Zero Harm for many years but it appears to have been discovered by a larger number of organisations in more recent years. In recent times I have been receiving communications from a senior operational manager in a prominent Qld organisation arguing strongly that Zero Harm is doing more harm than good. There have been

papers at some major OHS conferences in recent times questioning the value of Zero Harm. There was extended discussion on the topic on the Safety Institute of Australia OHS discussion forum some months ago. I found the paper on this topic on the Intersafe web-site quite informative.

The most commonly reported problems with Zero Harm that I hear reported are-

1. It leads to covering up and under reporting of personal damage.
2. Inordinate amounts of time, effort and resources are spent on very minor issues thus making a mockery of the safety management system

Zero harm is warm, fuzzy stuff with an emotional appeal, the trouble with emotional appeal is it sometimes prevents logical analysis.

Some people say zero harm is a fallacy and the goals are impossible or unachievable and there is far too much focus on minor injuries to the detriment of the serious side of town.

I think my major objection to zero harm is it does not target attention, effort and limited resources on the serious injuries where you get the biggest bang for your buck. Of course you are also kidding yourself if you think you can actually achieve zero harm. Goals must be realistic and not only admirable.

Australian safety researcher Geoff McDonald has a system of classifying personal damage occurrences ("Accidents ") that goes something like this-

- Class 1-Permanently alters the future of the individual
- Class 2-Temporarily alters the future of the individual
- Class 3 –Inconveniences the individual

Geoff has investigated many thousand Class 1 damage occurrences in his career and maintains the most effective way to make meaningful progress in safety is by focusing on the class 1 phenomena.

A study into Australia's personal damage experience by the Productivity Council said 13% of occurrences were Class 1 with 82% of the damage.

Zero Class 1 damage is the approach I would take in order to target our efforts and limited resources in the most productive area.

Commercial Safety Management Systems

No doubt there are commercial safety managements systems that add value to organisation's safety effort but I experienced one that was a disaster.

The introduction of the overseas S.M.S. was led aggressively by senior management despite a workshop of safety staff rejecting the concept. The first step was a consultant conducting a series of briefings for management, supervisors and workers. The consultant started talking about the thousands of people killed in industry in his country and a union rep asked him what made him think he could teach us anything about safety when fatalities in Australian industry were much less. It went downhill from there. At smoko the 4 senior managers came to me to ask that the consultant wrap the show up quickly because he was doing more harm than good. I wrote a report on the training session which was not warmly received by those leading the charge. The manager leading the charge got a significant touch up about the training at the next senior managers meeting.

The safety staff requested detail about the system but it only became apparent when the auditors came to Australia and showed us their auditor's books. The detail was kept close to the chest prior to that and when it was revealed I did not think it was anything earth shattering. There were a few things that were probably pretty silly in an Australian context. One of my jobs was to accompany the auditors on their audits, a task I did not relish. The auditor's book was their bible with little interest in other things. The auditors were definitely no stars and would have not lasted long working for me.

Somewhere along the way we had a 2 week auditor's course that was woeful. Early in the piece a meeting of participants was called to give the presenter guidance on how to do it better. I was in the middle of my Bachelor of Education (Adult & Workplace Education) and it was obvious the presenter was making a number of fundamental mistakes.

The system had a number of training courses we were required to do as part of the audit process but there was significant concern about the standard so we flew the training manager over from overseas so we could discuss a process for Australianising their courses. This was done with considerable cost and effort.

The system ran a few years in the company but died a natural death.

Even if the system had been technically good it was socially and culturally difficult for Australia. The psychological process of group think was evident in the consultants and those leading the charge in the company. Many commented on the arrogance of the auditors. The difficulty of using a standardised approach without identifying the unique needs of organisations was emphasised.

Since my association with this system I have had dealings with a number of Australian commercial S.M.S All suffer from the deficiency of lacking a focus on the Class 1 personal damage occurrence phenomenon.

The following are my observations on the above systems-

- They usually lock you into having audits with their auditors at considerable cost
- Some lock you into specified training with their trainers at considerable cost
- All adopt a standardised approach where it is difficult to accommodate the unique identified needs of organisations
- Lag indicators of safety performance rather than lead indicators tend to be used.
- My experience is that some have had poor quality auditors
- Generally costs are high

Major mistakes I have seen made in implementing OHS

The biggest mistake is management and supervision making decisions about safety without input from the workforce. Bear in mind some are not interested in contributing, give them the opportunity but do not force them.

Lack of management demonstrated commitment, leadership and drive from the top of the organisation.

Too much concentration on lag indicators such as the Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate at the expense of leading indicators.

Thinking minor personal damage is a good predictor of life-altering personal damage.

Not using the continuous improvement philosophy and other facets of Quality Management in your safety approach.

Lack of succinct paperwork. There is not much point in having detailed paperwork that is too much like hard work to read. Bear in mind however your paper work needs to be detailed enough to be defensible in court.

Using theory instead of real world approaches-Whatever you do reality test it with the workforce first.

Ignoring "When implementing change-Remember, people support what they create"

Not using face to face communications whenever possible.

Communicating change with the workforce use the supervisor not senior management, use face to face communications and frame communications relevant to the immediate work area and processes.

Not training formal and informal leaders in Safety Leadership.

Using enterprise "accident" experience to guide action rather than industry taxonomies of permanently life-altering personal damage.

Putting too much emphasis on the risk ratings from risk assessments, the reality is that a lot of risk assessment is very subjective.

Spending too much time in the office instead of the field where the action is happening.

For further guidance refer to the free e-book on ohschange.com.au

The toughest safety assignment I have had

George gets a call from a management consultant, can I commit a bit of time to review a company's Safety Management System? Said yes and was told 2 of the company directors want to meet me before going ahead. I think they must take safety seriously if the directors want to meet me, big mistake!

Am there a week or so and they present me with 5 Prohibition Notices and about 32 Improvement Notices, these are overdue for a response to the regulator. About 20 of the Improvement notices are about confined space work, they build big steel tanks.

I discovered the management style of the organisation was very autocratic. The workers were expected to follow the orders of management without question or discussion. The organisation had massive turnover, what happens when you treat your people like crap.

I look at the relevant legislation and relevant Australian Standard, work with the health & safety representative, talk to the blokes, observe practice and do an audit. They have confined space working procedures that cover possibly 50% of the requirements but even these are not being

followed. In talking to the blokes who do the work I hear stories of blokes being overcome by fume and having to be dragged out of the confined space.

My audit report detailed the many areas where practice was not meeting legislative and Australian Standard requirements. In my innocence I thought my audit would galvanise management into action. When I realised my audit had little impact I convinced the director in charge of the workshop to get an outside consultant to do an audit. They did a very thorough job and as expected slammed the organisation. There was grudging acceptance from management that there was possibly a need for minor work. The reality was that a major overhaul was required.

I came under a fair bit of pressure from management to pull my head in and back off on the matter. Meantime the Managing Director comes back from overseas and is aghast that I have spent a few grand on an external audit. I suspect he is getting a filtered version of events from the directors who do not wish to admit what a mess things are in.

We have a safety committee meeting where I report on the consultant's audit. The Managing Director fought me every inch of the way and tried to get me to back down. He got quite angry because he was not used to people sticking to their guns when he opposed them. I advised the M.D. to talk to his solicitors and he would find out I was right. After the meeting one of the safety officers said he had never seen anyone stand up to the Managing Director the way I did.

Deadly silence for a couple of weeks and then the M.D. bounces into my office all keen to make the changes, we all reckoned he had been to see his solicitors. One of the directors said it was the biggest turnaround he had ever seen in the M.D.

I got the approval to make the required changes but it was like pulling teeth because of management reluctance. I finally got something reasonably acceptable but hell it was hard work. I was later told I was a bit of a hero to the workers as they had been trying to get the changes made for a couple of years.

Between a number of Improvement Notices, a review of legislation, a review of the relevant Australian Standard, my audit and an external audit I have never been on firmer grounds to make safety recommendations. I was lied to, treated like an idiot and pressure was applied to make me back down. It would have been very easy to walk away but that would continue to put the workers at risk.

For the first time in many years as an OHS professional I found it necessary to speak to the regulator about my experiences. I am aware the company has been the subject of 2 Enforceable Undertakings since I left

How to have an effective safety committee

Introduction

Safety committees are much maligned and often ineffective. They can easily denigrate to a whinge-fest and end up covering topics that should be dealt with on a routine, every day basis. There is a tendency to save issues up to a committee meeting rather than action straightaway. There is also a tendency to deal with minor issues.

1. Have a well developed charter for the committee, searching educational institution and government department web sites will find some good examples.
2. Train members in their roles and responsibilities.

3. Deal mainly with substantive issues, give the committee a meaty job to do.
4. Carrying out a force field analysis (Refer ohschange.com.au) with the committee can be very valuable.
5. A good way to use the committee is to have them do the leg work to recommend major change to senior management.
6. Produce succinct minutes.
7. Ensure people are given the necessary time to attend meetings and carry out necessary tasks, this is a common failure with committees.
8. The OHS professional often ends up being the chairperson, much better to have someone with management horsepower so decisions can be made on the spot.
9. An occasional guest speaker will liven the show up.
10. Substantive discussion and decisions must be feedback to the workforce.
11. Do not take yourself too seriously.
12. Celebrate success.
13. Require members to do their homework
14. Be conscious of Group-Think (Look the term up on Google if you are not familiar with it)
15. COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE

Remember that management must respond positively to well researched recommendations from the committee

Common law

Common law is not applicable in all states in Australia but in states where it is, educating supervisors and managers in it can bring additional benefit to your safety management system.

The Compliance with Common Law (in states where applicable)

There are four basic duties under common law :

1. To provide and maintain competent staff.
2. To provide and maintain a safe place of work.
3. To provide and maintain safe plant and appliances.
4. To provide and maintain a safe system of work * (a system means generally the way things are done)

The above duties contain few words but the meaning is quite significant. The employer really has to do everything reasonably and practically that he can do. Many would suggest he then has to go a few extra steps. Managers and supervisors really need to be trained in common law duties to fully realise the impact of this important area on how they manage safety.

A way I found successful to train supervisors and managers was for me to talk about common law from the safety perspective for about 30 minutes and then have the company solicitor to talk from the legal perspective for about the same period of time (You have to be careful the solicitor does not get too technical) We then had a mock court with half the participants presenting the case for a seriously injured employee and half the participants defending the employer. The solicitor was the judge and the employer usually loses (Refer to the paper Common Law Liability on ohschange.com.au)

Safety Benchmarking

Over a 14 month period in 1994 -5 BHP Minerals carried out an extensive international safety benchmarking exercise with “best in safety class” companies throughout the world which cost many millions.

25 locations throughout the world participated in the study. An approximate 100 page report on findings has been published.

The following were recurring themes in the world’s best safety performers.

1. Executive management provides the impetus for safety performance. This means that senior management is not only committed to and supports safety, but that it insists on safety performance in a manner that is clearly understood and echoed at all levels.
2. Management focus is a key to quality safety performance.
*1 & 2 above were seen as key factors
3. Existence of a company-wide framework or systematic, standardised approach to safety. The approach has performance standards that receive regular internal and external audits.
4. Objectives are set and organisations work towards set targets for implementation of the objectives.
5. Safety personnel report in at the highest level in the organisations. They have mainly an advisory function. Management and supervision drives the safety program not the safety personnel.
6. Effective safety training targeted to identified needs at all levels. Induction training and detailed safety training for supervisors and managers was high on the priority list. Regular safety meetings were seen as important.
7. Active personal involvement of senior management personnel in the safety program.
8. Safety is considered in performance evaluations of all staff.
9. Regular, detailed audits of the safety management system.
10. Formal approaches to hazard identification and risk analysis, employees were fully involved in this.
11. Formal emergency response procedures that were practiced and audited.
12. The best in class addressed contractor safety before contractors were allowed on site, they pre-qualified them based on safety and made safety performance a contract condition. Contractors were expected to perform at the same safety level as permanent employees.
13. High on the list of the ways the best in class built safety awareness were management participation and leadership, dissemination of information, safety meetings and rewards or recognition of performance.
14. Safety is a condition of employment and dismissals occur for non-performance.
15. Well-managed rehabilitation programs are in place.
16. The best in class use medical examinations and testing to ensure fitness for duty.
17. There were E.A.P.s in place.
18. There were off the job safety programs.
19. There was an emphasis on vehicle / plant maintenance and driver / operator training programs.

20. There were extensive PPE training, maintenance and audit programs.
21. Lock-out procedures were used instead of tag-out.
22. Best in class managers and supervisors respond positively to safety issues that are raised.
23. Best in class supervisors are responsible for safety auditing, investigating personal damage occurrences (accidents), planned job observations and training.
24. All levels in the organisation make decisions that reflect the philosophy "Safety first- Production will follow".

It is suggested Safety Management Systems be built around the above benchmarking findings.

OHS tools for managing safety

Job Safety Analysis

Job Safety Analysis (J.S.A.) is a simple yet highly effective technique that is under-utilised in industry. J.S.A. should be used with **critical** tasks-

- High risk tasks
- Tasks with an incident history
- New tasks

J.S.A. is based on the principle that any job or task can be separated into a set of relatively simple steps and that the hazards associated with each step can be identified. Solutions to control hazards at each step can then be developed and written into safe working procedures.

The advantages of J.S.A. are

1. S.W.P.'s can be developed for skills training and use on the job
2. Developing J.S.A.'s helps to raise the safety awareness of workers
3. Assists in making observations of safe behaviour
4. Involves workers in the safety programme in a relevant, meaningful manner

J.S.A. Technique-Summary

1. Select the job or task to be analysed
2. Separate the job into its basic steps
3. Identify all the hazards / potential losses associated with each step
4. Evaluate your options for hazard / loss control action
5. Establish controls for each hazard or other potential loss area
6. Prepare a Safe Work Procedure

For further information see the Job Safety Analysis paper by this author under OHS articles on ohschange.com.au

George's down to earth advice to safety representatives and safety committee members

I have been working in OHS for nearly 4 decades and in that time have been stuffed around by OHS professionals, employers, employees, unions, government, employer associations and educators. I have developed a fair bit of cynicism about how fair dinkum the various parties are about safety.

At the risk of being crucified, castrated and thrown out of the safety club I have to say I have a philosophical objection to the need for safety representatives and safety committees. I believe if organisations have their involvement and communications mechanisms working properly there is no real need for these safety mechanisms. Of course I realise this ideal situation rarely exists.

From my study in management of organisational change I have adopted the motto "When initiating change-Remember-People support what they create" Widespread communication, involvement and participation is essential for effective health, safety & environment change.

I have to tell you a number of the so-called OHS professionals I have worked with would not have the competency to make the lamingtons for the school fete.

The idea that safety is the number one priority of a company is crap and anyone who tells you this is playing with himself, making money is the prime reason companies exist.

Entering on the OHS battlefield is not for the faint-hearted and is not easy. You have to present well thought out and researched arguments and accept you will often get an unreasonable response. Some of the people you end up dealing with are bloody-minded with little interest in the workers welfare.

Elsewhere I have given some thoughts on how to have an effective safety committee so for the rest of this I will concentrate on the role of the safety representative.

- Make sure you are trained in your role and responsibilities.
- Have a weekly inspection of your area of responsibility.
- Familiarise yourself with company safety policies and procedures.
- Try to keep the OHS professional on side, If they are any good they should be a source of assistance.
- It is easy in safety matters to take an emotional approach, often a well researched argument with financial justification is required.
- Depending on the industrial climate in your organisation will determine how useful getting unions involved in safety disputes is.
- If you have a solid argument stick to your guns and show no signs of weakness.
- Do not be afraid to tell your fellow workers when they are falling down on safety, by the same token communicate your expectations to management.
- If your first attempt to introduce change fails, analyse the situation and work smarter next time

Risk assessment tips

The risk management process consists of hazard identification, risk assessment and hazard control. Some people tend to get fixated on the risk assessment part and do not place enough emphasis on hazard control. Personally I find Haddon's 10 countermeasures more useful than the hierarchy of controls when developing controls

Risk assessment is the cornerstone of many organisations approach to OHS. The reality is that it can be a very subjective process and an over-concentration on risk scores can mislead badly.

The traditional wisdom for simple risk assessments is to use a matrix consisting of Probability and Consequence or Probability, Consequence and Exposure. I prefer the latter method developed by Fine.

The following tips are given to improve the efficiency of the risk assessment process-

- Replicate the situation you are assessing as accurately as possible
- Use a team approach, about 5 people seems a workable number
- Ensure team members are highly experienced in the risks being assessed.
- Reality check the risk assessment with the workforce
- Ensure team members are trained in risk assessment

- Have developed risk assessments reviewed by an appropriately qualified and experienced, objective third party

Accident investigation summary

The term accident is an emotionally laden term that implies blame. I prefer to use the term personal damage occurrence.

Summary of the personal damage occurrence investigation process

- Provide first-aid and medical care to injured persons and make the site safe
- Ensure Emergency Response Plans are activated
- Report the event as required by local regulations and site procedures.
- Secure the site until the organisation's and regulator's investigation is complete.
- Notify next of kin
- Investigate and report essential factors.
- Have relevant persons sign a written statement
- Use open questions.
- Take heaps of photos from many angles
- It may be appropriate to develop a sketch or diagram
- Take samples, tag & preserve them
- Do not move evidence
- Identify the people involved and isolate and separate them. Interviews at both the scene and a quiet place will probably be required. It is essential to put those being interviewed at ease
- It may be necessary to recreate the incident with due regard to safety
- Report the findings
- Develop a plan for short- and long-term corrective action
- Disseminate key learnings to stakeholders
- Implement the corrective action plan
- Obtain sign-off by management
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the corrective action
- Make changes for continuous improvement
- Notify other sections of the organisation and your industry about the circumstances of the incident.

Auditing OHS systems

There is some confusion in practice between the terms inspection and audit, I distinguish between the two by saying you inspect things and you audit systems.

Organisations that are successful at Occupational Health and Safety have regular comprehensive internal and external audits where OHS standards are introduced. What excellence in implementation of the standards would look like should be defined and people trained in this. A detailed set of audit questions, based on the fore-going should be developed as well as a detailed set of auditing guidelines. The roles of auditors should also be defined. Sites to be audited should be briefed on the auditing guidelines and auditors on the audit questions and auditing guidelines. A series of annual Executive Safety Audits should be introduced at the various sites with an audit team led by a senior manager to give the process significant management horsepower. A quality

assurance approach where NCR (Non-compliance reports) are issued should be used and formal processes introduced to follow-up on audit recommendations.

Whatever paperwork you produce, be succinct. Auditing documentation tends to get unwieldy and difficult to use in practice.

A method of rating findings must be used.

Need an opening meeting with stakeholders, including senior management. The auditing process must be explained.

Need a closing meeting with stakeholders, including senior management to discuss findings and allow rebuttal. Some organisations like to have all supervisors and health & safety representatives at this meeting.

Need a written report with a concise management summary.

A physical inspection of the workplace will identify safety system deficiencies.

Need to examine the safety "paper trail".

It is essential that the guidelines to implement whatever standard you are auditing against are well publicised and agreed to beforehand as well as the auditing process agreed to.

Be prepared for people to lie to you. Be prepared for people to genuinely think an issue was addressed when it was not. Ask for solid evidence to back up people's assertions.

Non OHS tools for managing safety

Safety communications

There is not much point having an excellent safety message if you cannot get it across to the stakeholders. Communications failure is a major impediment to success in safety. The world of safety is famous for well-meaning, ponderous, glossy publications that no one really knows about, cares about or uses. Safety communications are also famous for the use of “weasel-words”. “Weasel-words” promise a lot but deliver little.

“When reading your correspondence the reader must say “Wow” in the first third of the page”

“When listening to your presentation the listener must say “Wow” within the first 3 minutes”

The following tips are given to enhance communications-

1. Use face-to-face communications whenever possible
2. Use the supervisor to communicate whenever possible
3. Frame messages relevant to the immediate work area not some obscure corporate goal
4. Avoid management road shows to communicate major change, a lot of the workers will see it as propaganda and a bit of a wank
5. Aim to be succinct in both written and verbal communication, there is no need to wade through a whole pile of superficial detail to get to the essential message. For routine correspondence aim for 1 page, 2 pages maximum
6. Stick to the must knows
7. Use photographs, diagrams, flow-charts etc. to illustrate main points.
8. Important written communications must always be followed up by a face-to-face meeting
9. Do not be surprised if your e-mail messages are mis-interpreted
10. Use active listening and questioning to quickly identify relevant issues
11. Provide detailed feedback seeking confirmation as required
12. Communications must be targeted at the needs of the audience, jargon must be avoided and one must be conscious of body language
13. Be clear about your goal and communicate this to the reader
14. Explain what you want the receiver to do
15. Establish your credibility early up
16. Have someone proof read your work.
17. Have an executive summary with major reports
18. Use short sentences and scannable paragraphs
19. Never send when angry, big temptation with e-mails
20. If possible write a draft, sleep on it and proof read the next day. If you have a few days grace write the draft and go back to it at least once every day
21. Always spell-check
22. Have a strong opening and conclusion

Safety culture

A good safety culture is an elusive thing those responsible for safety management systems struggle to achieve. Culture is often defined as “The way we do things around here”. Schein (1990) defines

organisational culture as the system of shared beliefs and values that develops within an organisation and guides the behaviour of its members.

Senior managers are the key to a successful safety culture. A true safety culture is established when safety is valued as highly as productivity. Managers and supervisors need to be held accountable for safety in the same manner as production.

Like many things in safety and business generally, leadership is the key.

How to improve safety culture

1. Development of a robust Safety Management System guided by the lessons from the paper "What Makes a Safety Management System Fly" under OHS articles on ohschange.com.au
2. Using industry data on Class 1 personal damage occurrences to guide your safety efforts
3. Recruitment, selection and retention of safety-focused staff
4. Excellent leadership / build trust between all levels of personnel/ Rewards for excellent performance and lesser rewards for those that are really trying
5. Excellent teamwork
6. Excellent communications, employees really value face to face communications from their supervisor
7. Role modelling by supervisors and managers is important
8. Clearly defined responsibilities and accountabilities that are reinforced
9. Regular, rigorous audits of key functions
10. Short, succinct written procedures for key tasks (use diagrams, pictures, flow-charts wherever possible)
11. Written management plans for key performance areas
12. Benchmarking against the excellent performers
13. Excellent learning programmes guided by a detailed Learning Needs Analysis

Note

For further detail refer to the paper "Safety culture and how to improve it " under OHS articles on ohschange.com.au

References

Schein E.,1990,*Organizational Culture*, American Psychologist, vol 45,no.2 ,pp109-19

Interpersonal skills

When interviewing OHS professionals many interviewers focus on their technical skills. Frankly I think communications and interpersonal skills are much more important than technical skills. You can be really bright, you can be highly qualified and trained, you can be well read but if you cannot get on well with people and influence them to change, you will be a waste of space as an OHS professional.

I adopt a philosophy that "People Support What They Create" Lots of communication, discussion and identification of needs will give you the buy in you need. A bit of humour never goes astray. AND please get to the point and do not give excessive detail. Focus on the benefits of initiatives to the other person.

When interacting with others you need to try to see the situation from the other person's perspective and focus on What is in it for me from their view.
The following 3 techniques are invaluable-

Appropriate Self-Disclosure

You will find in a new relationship if you reveal a little bit of you (provided it is appropriate) the other party will reveal a little bit of them (provided it is appropriate), if you then reveal a little bit more of you (provided it is appropriate) they will reveal a little bit more of them (provided it is appropriate), and so the cycle goes on. This is very simple, incredibly effective and I use it all the time to build relationships. Of course if you really hang all your dirty washing out it will probably stuff up the process.

Reflective Listening

This is a very powerful technique to get to the core beliefs of those around you. Someone says something, you may say "If I understand you properly you think x", this gives the other party the opportunity to expand on their view or "Correct me if I am wrong but I think you are saying y"
The formula

There will be times others do things that annoy you, often they will have what they think are good reasons for what they are doing and they will have no idea they are annoying you. A good formula for these situations is to express your feelings as follows-

"When you A, I feel B, because C, and I would like you to do D, because E"

The only person who knows how you feel is you and most people will not know how you feel and many will be happy to adjust their behaviour accordingly. If this does not happen at least you have the basis for ongoing discussion.

I suggest all safety professionals read up on these techniques, it can make your life much easier!

Team-building

How to have effective teams:

- Set clear goals
- Set clear objectives for measuring effectiveness
- Define communications mechanisms
- Define decision making processes
- Determine team membership
- Assign a leader
- Plan team-building activities
- Monitor and report on progress
- Celebrate success

For further information see Team one-pager and Team-building workshop on ohschange.com.au

Effective listening

The OHS professional attends many meetings, facilitates a lot of learning and generally converses with a lot of people, often what is not said is as important as what is said. Being a good reader of body language is essential to get to the core of meaning. Effective listening is a vital skill. Effective communication exists between 2 people when the process of interpreting and understanding the sender's message is the same way the sender intended it.

Sources of difficulty by the sender-

- Too low to be heard
- Accent obscures clarity
- Forgetting the purpose
- Body language contradicts the verbal message
- Sources of difficulty by the listener
- Being pre-occupied
- Listening mainly for an opening to get the floor
- Letting your personal beliefs interfere with the message
- Judging the speaker
- Not asking for clarification

The 2 best types of listening are-

Attentive

You are genuinely interested in the communication, try hard to understand and actively listen.

Reflective

You re-state or paraphrase the message as you understand it and reflect back for verification and amplification. Reflective listening is a core counselling technique.

Needs analysis

A major lesson in my professional life is that whatever is done in OHS must be preceded by a thorough needs analysis. The perceptions on needed change that managers, supervisors and workers have must be incorporated in the change process. There must be organised processes in place to surface these perceptions.

Needs Analysis Project-Generic Approach

- Identify stakeholders
- Separate stakeholder's needs from their wants
- Define the objective of the project or work to be carried out and facilitate a force-field analysis
- Identify project risks
- Define current state
- Define desired state
- Explore how important the gap is
- What is the cause of the gap
- What are the solutions to close the gap
- What are the benefits of the solutions
- What are the costs / commitment of the solutions
- What are the risks of the proposed solutions
- How do you measure success

*Throughout define Phases / Activities / Milestones / Targets of the project
Refer to "Safety Project Steps" on ohschange.com.au for more detail.

Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement is a long-term business strategy to improve your business in terms of customer value and satisfaction, quality, speed to market, flexibility and reduced cost. One of the principal objectives of continuous improvement is to increase the skills and capacities of all the organisation's employees so they can effectively engage in problem solving.

Author's experience with Continuous Improvement / Quality Management

While the author was employed in a senior OHS role with a major Australian organisation he was involved in implementation of a robust approach to Continuous Improvement / Quality Management.

Some of the initiatives were-

- Customers were spoken to in order to define what the customers wanted from the organisation.
- The work necessary to ensure success in meeting customer needs was identified.
- How to carry out the work necessary for success was defined.
- Detailed work instructions and working procedures were developed for core tasks necessary for success.
- A document control system was introduced.
- All employees received training in Continuous Improvement / Quality Management.
- Continuous Improvement / Quality Management champions were appointed in major departments.
- A senior manager was appointed to lead the Continuous Improvement / Quality Management effort.
- There were regular audits of the Continuous Improvement / Quality Management system.
- All employees were actively encouraged to question the efficiency of the work they did and suggest continuous improvement initiatives.
- There were regular meetings and other communications about the Continuous Improvement / Quality Management.
- An extremely aggressive approach to upgrading employee skills in all areas was embarked upon after an exhaustive learning needs analysis.

Since leaving this organisation the author has worked in organisations that have had no Continuous Improvement / Quality Management systems or systems, that while they have had their systems pass certification audits, do not really have a continuous improvement philosophy.

Some of the things he has noticed in these organisation are-

- Customers, both internal and external, complain that their needs are not being met.
- Work processes are dependent on the knowledge of individuals rather than defined procedures. When Fred goes on long service leave for 3 months the organisation struggles because how to do some of the things Fred does are only known by Fred.
- The bureaucracy and bull-shit swamps the organisation and impedes efficient operation.
- Communication is confused and inefficient.
- Responsibilities are unclear.

- Employees mutter about how ineffective some of the work they do is and their efforts to improve things with their supervisors fall on deaf ears.
- Politics rather than efficiency shape practice.
- Those who question procedure and practice quickly learn this is not an approach received favourably by management.
- Employees talk to others who do similar work and realise there are better ways of doing things.
- Some of the workforce are un-empowered and dissatisfied with their lot.
- Management is perceived as being remote from the real needs of the business and not interested in the thoughts of the employees.
- The learning function is under-developed and attendance at learning is guided by un-structured approaches rather than thorough learning needs analysis.

The author's observation is that many organisations have Continuous Improvement / Quality Management systems that are only partially enacted and do not reap all the benefits to be gained from these systems .

Question

In these economic times can your business survive without a continuous improvement philosophy?

Report writing

OHS professionals write many reports, read many reports and ask others to prepare reports for them. A major sin is long rambling reports that do not get to the point quickly and succinctly! Prepare succinct reports yourself and make it clear that your expectation is that others do likewise. If you receive a long report ask the author for a succinct summary of the major points. Often people just want to know what has to be done and why and can do without all the padding.

- Need to consider your audience-Personal style, technical background, formality and their likely attitude to your communication.
- Generally a team approach to preparing your report has advantages, put a fair bit of work into defining the scope of your report.
- Use relevant means of gathering necessary data. Search the internet but be certain of your source, experiments, surveys, interviews, questionnaires.
- Draft, set aside after get comments on the draft and re-draft.
- Spell check and get at least one other person to edit the final.
- Structure
- Front-Cover, title, introduction, contents page, list of illustrations, abstract or executive summary.
- Report body, discussion, conclusions, recommendations.
- End, references, appendices.
- Pictures, diagrams, sketches and flow charts can have a powerful impact and save a lot of written words.
- Use short words and short sentences and avoid jargon, use concrete rather than abstract terms.
- Try to present both sides of the case.
- Be succinct, busy people do not have time to write waffle that others are too busy to read. Bear in mind however your paper work needs to be detailed enough to be defensible in court.
- Follow up an important report with face-to-face communication or a presentation.

The above is adapted from “*Writing and Presenting Reports*” by B Eunson which is well worth a read.

Change management

Implementing OHS management systems is essentially about change management. The OHS professional who learns about change management will have a better chance of being effective. Change has been around a long time. The only thing constant in business is change.

“I cannot say whether things will get better if we change, what I can say is that they must change if they are to get better” (*Georg Christoph Lichtenstein, 1742-1799*)

Dr. M. Wilkinson puts change into perspective when he says “Organisational change is a generic body of knowledge that is applicable across the board but only when contextualised into the particular workplace within the culture and people characteristics and professions etc. of the situation /workplaces”

Today’s enterprise must be able to react quickly to external change while managing internal change effectively. Technology is opening up new doors, thus adding to the potential for stress. Those who survive and thrive will be those who can adapt to the changes.

Change can be exciting, a welcome relief from the monotonous tedium of daily life and it may open new doors. On the other hand change may mark the boundaries of the comfort zone, beyond which lies unknown territory full of nasty surprises, signposts leading to hard work ahead and holding the real possibility of final failure.

Employees often resist changes which diminish skill requirements in jobs, personal status, authority, power or influence, personal or job security, remuneration, workplace communication and opportunities for social interaction. They also resist changes which are forced on them, are not fully understood, affect accepted ways of doing things, violate behavioural norms, disrupt established social relationships, make people feel ineffective or incompetent or expose personal weaknesses.

Wood outlines several organisational change principles

1. honesty is critical during organisational change
2. without knowledge of organisational change aims people can not participate
3. organisational change is unsettling for most people
4. when people participate in defining organisational change objectives the more they will be comfortable getting results
5. people value recognition for their change management endeavours more than material reward
6. traditional cultures do not recognise or respect mature individuality yet change management expects people to behave like adults
7. organisational change cannot be effective without the full commitment of every person involved in the change
8. it is the people’s behaviour during organisational change linked to clearly defined values that promote the change management process
9. team work and interpersonal relationship are fundamental if the change management process is to be successful
10. for unity to be maintained during the change management process people need a clearly defined shared vision of the change aim

11. organisational change is more effective when people are empowered and given the time needed to build quality into the change process
12. organisational change needs individual behaviour and attitude change
13. to achieve individual behaviour and attitude change first the organisational change of culture must occur
14. the change management process must inspire and motivate people if it does then organisations enhance productivity

Kotter speaks about the 8 steps for successful large-scale change.

1. Increase urgency-Those who are successful in change begin their work by creating a sense of urgency among relevant people
2. Build the guiding team-With urgency turned up the more successful change agents pull together a guiding team with the credibility, skills, connections, reputations and formal authority required to provide change leadership.
3. Get the vision right-The guiding team creates sensible, clear, uplifting visions and sets of strategies.
4. Communicate for buy-in-Communication of the vision and strategies comes next-simple heart-felt messages sent through many unclogged channels. Deeds are more important than words. Symbols speak loudly. Repetition is the key
5. Empower action-Key obstacles that stop people working on the vision are removed.
6. Create short-term wins-Short-term wins provide credibility, resources and momentum to the overall effort.
7. Do not let up-Change leaders do not let-up they create wave after wave of change until the vision becomes a reality.
8. Make change stick-Change leaders make change stick by nurturing a new culture. Appropriate promotions, skilful orientation and events can make a big difference.

Kotter's text "*The Heart of Change*" is a recommended must-read for anyone undertaking cultural change.

Conclusion

Change can be exciting or boring, satisfying or frustrating but never easy.

The ways the author has driven OHS change includes-Continuous improvement / Quality management programs, leading OHS project teams, implementing OHS management systems, facilitating OHS learning and leading OHS problem solving groups using techniques such as force-field analysis.

Prosci Change Management (Look them up on the web)

When a group undergoes change it is not the organisation that changes but rather it is the behaviour of individuals. Organisational change management and individual change management must be used together to manage change successfully.

A.K.A.R. Model

Awareness of the need for change

Knowledge of how to change

Ability to implement change

Reinforcement to sustain the change

Organisational change depends on individual change

Refer to “*Organisational Change Management Principles and OHS*” on ohschange.com.au for further detail.

Customer service

The customer is king and you are stuffed without them. Always treat your customer like a king or queen or your competitors will.

There will be times when your customer is disorganised and a pain in the bum, when this occurs refer to the above.

I advise most people in organisations, regardless of how lowly their position, to think of themselves as an internal consultant. Their “customers” are their boss, their boss’s boss and everyone else they interact with and who rely on them, even though it may be in a small manner. Your success and future advancement relies very heavily on these people being satisfied customers.

The saying that “The customer is always right” is often wrong in my experience. Customers often have only a superficial understanding of their needs and frequently confuse wants with needs. A core skill of any consultant is to help customers define their needs and scope the work they want you to do for them. If you do not do this you can do what they think they want done and you run the risk of getting the blame when it does not get the desired results.

The following tips are given on customer service-

- People always remember the person who served them better than the product
- Remember your example will affect others
- Remember people’s names
- Be visible
- Go the extra mile for a good customer
- Never try to win an argument with a customer
- Ask for regular feedback
- What you do speaks louder than what you say
- Always answer the phone personally
- Keep promises
- Listen to your customers
- Be helpful even when there is no immediate profit
- Always throw in something extra free

Developing trust

Having worked in industrially volatile environments I have seen trust breakdown between management and workers. Sometimes it has been for no real reasons and people were working on perceptions. Without trust it is impossible to have an efficient operation.

Introducing OHS change inevitably upsets the established order in organizations and forces people to question their existing role in the organization. Often people will be asked to do something that is different from the norm and to do that which they do not agree with. Persons introducing and

leading OHS change must ensure they are trusted by those they are seeking to join them in the OHS change journey. Appropriate self-disclosure is an excellent technique for building relationships. If people do not trust those leading safety change there will never be wholehearted adoption of the leaders approach. People may agree to the leaders face but do little to advance the leaders ideas, innovative ways to sabotage the leader quite often occur in a climate of minimum trust.

Trust is essential for a relationship to grow and develop. In order to build a relationship you must learn to create a climate of trust that reduces your own and the other person's fears of betrayal and rejection and promotes the hope of acceptance, support and confirmation. There is a risk involved in trusting.

In order to build a relationship, two people must build mutual trust. This is done during a commitment period in which they risk themselves either by disclosing more and more of their thoughts, feelings and reactions to immediate situations and to each other, or by expressing acceptance, support and cooperativeness toward each other. If, when disclosing they do not get the acceptance they need, they may back off from the relationship. If they are accepted, they will continue to risk self-disclosure and continue to develop the relationship. As both people continue to trust and be self-disclosing, the relationship continues to grow. (Refer to People Skills by Bolton, this is suggested as a must read for those involved in OHS Change)

Group-Think

There is no doubt the most significant OHS change the author has driven has been when he was leading OHS project teams or a member of such a well led team. Working in teams practising good team building principles can develop enormous synergy to crash through barriers to driving effective safety change.

A caution to working in teams is the area of group-think. The author has not seen group-think in action all that often but when he has seen it in action it has a devastating effect.

Identifying group-think-

- Group members stereotype non-members and label them as enemies or outsiders not worth negotiating with or worrying about
- People hesitate to air any discomfort, doubts or uncertainties they feel about the group decisions or policies, so that consensus seems unanimous
- Reluctant to shatter complacency group members do not bring information or evidence that does not conform to the groups expectations and stereotypes to the groups attention
- The group discusses only a few alternatives and reaches a decision quickly concentrating only on good points
- The group feels invulnerable leading to excessive optimism and risk taking
- The group ignores or rationalises warnings or signs that it is operating under false assumptions, making poor decisions or developing poor strategy
- There is strong pressure on group members to conform to group norms

Preventing group-think-

- Train team members in group-think
- Get a diverse team together
- Treat conflict as an essential part of a solid outcome
- Let the group know there are no dumb ideas or questions

- Allow time for decisions as a team
- Bring in a devil's advocate
- Bring in a specialist
- Do not surround yourself with yes men.

Note

Be aware of group-think appearing in your teams and knock it on the head as soon as it starts to appear. If group-think becomes entrenched the situation will piss a lot of people off and be very difficult to recover

From The Penguin Team Leaders Toolkit by K. Cole

Marketing safety

Make no bones about it, safety is a product that has to be marketed in ways similar to the ways the products your organisation produces are marketed. A good OHS section on your organisations web site will help. It is best to treat everybody you interact with as customers whether they be internal or external.

Marketing goals

- Increased activity through creating an interest in my products
- Increased awareness of OHS through visits to the web site
- Get more repeat customers
- Raise safety professional profile
- Launch new products
- Increase client recommendations
- Improve relationships with customers
- Be a credible source of best practice information on Safety for employees

Marketing tips

- Have a Unique Selling Proposition
- Say thank you to customers
- Always give something of value free
- Give customers What's In It For Me from their perspective
- Give them an offer they cannot refuse
- Show the customer how the product will benefit them
- Keep in contact with old customers much easier to sell to than getting new customers
- Have a call to action
- Always treat the customer like a King or Queen-If you do not your competitors will
- People buy benefits but want to know features
- Word of mouth from satisfied customers is the best advertising, if they are happy they may tell one person, if they are not they will tell 20
- Send regular e-mail updates
- Ask for referrals and put on web site, reward customers for referrals
- Have a regular newsletter to clients and make available through subscription on the web site
- Promotional flyer, bios, note pads, stubby coolers, business cards to hand out at activities
- Consider cost / benefits of setting up promotional booth at safety conferences ,quite expensive but a lot of exposure to safety decision makers, have a trade show discount, big

bottle of scotch for prize for putting business card in the bucket, need booth advertising, tv, video & computer

- Enter awards in my industry, lots of free publicity if I win
- Publish papers / speak at conferences
- Put standard learning packages on web site and promote
- Get competitor intelligence
- Need to develop a time frame for implementation

Leadership

Leadership is the often forgotten key to excellence in most facets of business and life. Formal and informal leaders in business need to be trained in Safety Leadership.

Leadership quotes

You can only lead others where you yourself are willing to go.

Nothing is so potent as the silent influence of a good example.

The best leader is the one who has enough sense to pick good people to do the job and self-restraint to keep from meddling with them while they do it.

What is important as a leader is not what happens when you are there but what happens when you are NOT there.

The very essence of leadership is that you have to have a vision. It has to be a vision you articulate clearly and forcefully on every occasion.

Leaders must behave the way they wish their followers would behave.

Every now and then leaders should look back to see if anyone is following.

A leader takes people where they want to go, a great leader takes people where they ought to be.

The first basic ingredient of leadership is a guiding vision. The leader has a clear idea of what he wants to do professionally and personally and the strength to persist in the face of setbacks, even failures.

As a leader you set the tone for your entire team. If you have a positive attitude, your team will achieve much more.

A sense of humour is part of the art of leadership, of getting along with people and getting things done.

Make heroes out of the employees who personify what you want to be seen in the organisation.

You do not know what you can get away with until you try.

Lead, follow or get out of the way.

If you are truly a leader, you will help others to not just see themselves as they are, but also what they can become.

A real leader faces the music even when he does not like the tune-*Anon*.

A good leader inspires people to have confidence in the leader, a great leader inspires people to have confidence in themselves-*Eleanor Roosevelt*

It is the nature of man to rise to greatness if greatness is expected of him-*John Steinbeck*

Successful leaders see the opportunity in every difficulty rather than the difficulty in every opportunity-*Reed Markham*

The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help them or have concluded you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership-*Colin Powell*

A leader's role is to raise peoples aspirations for what they can become and release their energies so they will try to get there-*David R Gergen*

If you obey all the rules, you will miss all the fun-*Katherine Hepburn*

Hell, there are no rules here, we are trying to accomplish something-*Thomas A Edison*

The supreme quality of leadership is unquestionably integrity-*Dwight D Eisenhower*

A good objective of leadership is to help those that are doing poorly do well and to help those that are doing well to do even better. -*Jim Rohn*

For further information put "Leadership Quotes" into Google. Laurie Lawrence's web site is particularly good. Refer also to the paper on "Safety Leadership" on ohschange.com.au

Military leaders on leadership

Many people agree that to attain the pinnacle of leadership, a person must be humble. It seems obvious that someone who is arrogant, self-important and condescending can never be a good leader. Neither can someone who does not want to lead-reluctant leaders are never good leaders. Former Australian Army Chief Peter Cosgrove once said "We want our leaders to be fair dinkum, as much among us as above us"

Sir Edward, Weary Dunlop developed his empathetic approach to leadership in the Japanese POW camps during World War 2. He identified 11 desirable aspects of leadership-

- Ability to communicate
- Courage
- Decisiveness
- Initiative
- Integrity
- Judgement
- Knowledge
- Loyalty
- Motivation
- Responsibility
- Selflessness

Dunlop said "The leaders is servant to all, able to show a disarming humility without the loss of authority"

From The Penguin Team Leaders Toolkit by K.Cole

OHS Leadership

Having survived a number of years in industry the author is acutely aware that leadership of an organisation can make or break the organisation. The importance of leadership is vastly underrated

in Australian industry, leadership is the forgotten key to excellence in business. Leaders send out messages, often subtly, about what they value and expect.

Livermore(in Carter, Ulrich & Goldsmith, p46) observes “The best system or model in the world is not going to do your organisation a bit of good unless you have a top down commitment to making it work. Once mid-level management and low level employees see top executives leading the way, most of them will begin to support the initiative as well.”

The most important quality people look for and admire in a leader is personal credibility. Credibility is the foundation of leadership. If we do not believe in the messenger we will not believe the message. Leadership is about influencing people to follow, management is about maintaining systems and processes

Four critical characteristics of effective leaders (*Private communication*)

1. Courage (make hard decisions, stick to them)
2. Loyalty (Upwards and downwards, without hesitation)
3. Integrity (In little as well as large things, be above reproach)
4. Knowledge (Know your people, know their fears, dreams & strengths, know your mission)

Quotable quote

“The people are fashioned according to the example of their king and edicts are less powerful than the life (example) of the king”

Claudian, c. 365, Egyptian epic poet

How to be a safety leader

The author is grateful to Dave Cowley of HP Hood LLC, Chelsea , MA 02150 (October 2000) for sharing the company tip card.

Five tips on how to be a Safety Leader

1. Walk the Talk-Visibly demonstrate safety by your actions, practice what you preach, wear proper protective equipment, employees look to you for example
2. Give Recognition-When you see an employee doing a job safely praise them for it, reward safety every chance you get
3. Report All Incidents-Report all incidents no matter how slight, emphasise it is vital to be on the look-out for near-misses, minor mishaps and close calls instead of waiting for an actual injury to occur
4. Follow-Up-If a safety concern has been raised, always perform follow-up and provide feedback to the employee
5. Ask Questions-Are employees using equipment that has been inspected(hand tools, forklifts, motor vehicles etc.)

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Note

For further detail on this topic refer to the Safety Leadership paper under OHS articles on ohschange.com.au

Leadership in safety-Ethics

I do not want to comment on the moral issues but it is fair to say the Monica business got American President, Bill Clinton, a lot of bad press. While I am not a student of American politics I am told Bill Clinton was poised to be recorded in American history as one of the greatest leaders of that country. Some say that despite the massive adverse publicity his leadership skills were such that a lot of people still believed in him.

The sporting world in Australia has no shortage of leaders who have been found lacking in the ethics area. Footballers are a problem, issues frequently occur in Australian Rules and Rugby League, less commonly in soccer and rarely in Rugby Union (Being an ex-Rugby Union player I know we are generally made of sterner stuff)

The Australian business landscape is littered with otherwise highly effective leaders who have failed through ethics issues.

Credibility is the foundation of leadership. You must do the right thing and be seen to do the right thing if you want to prosper as a leader. If you do the wrong thing you will be found out eventually and your credibility will be destroyed.

To be an effective leader people must trust you.

Introducing OHS change inevitably upsets the established order in organizations and forces people to question their existing role in the organization. Often people will be asked to do something that is different from the norm and to do that which they do not agree with. Persons introducing and leading OHS change must ensure they are trusted by those they are seeking to join them in the OHS change journey.

Leadership in safety-Trust

If people do not trust those leading safety change there will never be wholehearted adoption of the leaders approach. People may agree to the leaders face but do little to advance the leaders ideas, innovative ways to sabotage the leader quite often occur in a climate of minimum trust.

One organisation I worked for had a number of mechanical workshops where we trained employees in the job safety analysis technique and got them involved in preparing safe working procedures. Everything went well at these locations and we had an improved level of safety. In one workshop it was decided to get a consultant mechanical tradesman to prepare the safe working procedures with little involvement of the workers. The result was a mess. Besides from the important lack of local knowledge the workers had developed a lack of trust in the process and thought it was a management plot to devalue their work and allow the introduction of less skilled workers to do the

work traditionally done by tradesmen. This sabotaged the real safety improvements we were chasing. All in all an industrial relations disaster caused by faulty process and a lack of trust

“Trust is essential for a relationship to grow and develop. In order to build a relationship you must learn to create a climate of trust that reduces your own and the other person’s fears of betrayal and rejection and promotes the hope of acceptance, support and confirmation. There is a risk involved in trusting.

In order to build a relationship, two people must build mutual trust. This is done during a commitment period in which they risk themselves either by disclosing more and more of their thoughts, feelings and reactions to immediate situations and to each other, or by expressing acceptance, support and cooperativeness toward each other. If, when disclosing they do not get the acceptance they need, they may back off from the relationship. If they are accepted, they will continue to risk self-disclosure and continue to develop the relationship. As both people continue to trust and be self-disclosing, the relationship continues to grow”

The above is taken from Johnson D.W. *“Reaching Out”* (1990). This text is recommended reading for those leading safety change.

The only constant in the safety business is change. Australia has significant safety challenges and we must change to improve. Change is difficult at the best of times, if people do not trust the safety change leaders there is very little chance of success.

From my study of Management of Organisational Change I have adopted the motto “When initiating change, Remember, People support what they create” My simple advice is be open & honest with everybody (Australians can smell a bull-dust artist a mile away), involve your people, get your people talking, get your people doing things, show you are interested in, care about and are responsive to their opinions, if you do this most of your trust problems will disappear.

Learning

OHS Learning

Facilitating OHS learning is a very important part of an OHS professional's role but unfortunately many do not have high levels of skills in this area. The Cert. IV T.A.E. is the standard people are judged by. The reality is that this course has a number of limitations and only represents a learner's permit.

For the learning to have meaning activities should be organised to allow participants to discover the concepts for themselves (not always an easy thing to do). Discussions, case studies, practical exercises, role plays are preferred. These are usually more effective learning methods than the lecture but they take a longer period of time.

For adults interactive rather than passive learning strategies are preferred.

It has been suggested that we retain:

- 10 percent of what we read;
- 20 percent of what we hear;
- 30 percent of what we see;
- 50 percent of what we hear and see;
- 70 percent of what we say;
- 90 percent of what we say and do.

Saying and doing are certainly important for retention and later application.

For further information refer to *Adult learning principles and process* on ohschange.com.au

Implementation of a learning management system

In the early 1990's XYZ mining company revolutionised their approach to learning. I was heavily involved in this work in my role as Senior Safety Adviser in the Brisbane-based corporate OHS department.

1. Existing learning programs were examined and costed, many millions were being spent and it became obvious much of this money was wasted.
2. An exhaustive learning needs analysis was carried out. This worked formed the basis for the introduction of competency-based learning in the Australian mining industry.
3. Doctor Stephen Billett of Griffith University was engaged to research preferred and effective modes of delivering learning. Not surprisingly learning by doing coached by a content expert was favoured. A lot of people saw classroom learning as largely a waste of time. Carrying out authentic tasks in the workplace was seen as important.
4. External trainers and internal trainers, of which I was one, had to attend a week course with a unit that specialised in advanced learning techniques from the Qld. Department of Education. This emphasised interactive techniques and Action and Experiential learning.
5. Consultants were engaged to prepare self-paced, competency-based modules in many areas. The modules were given to learners and they were assigned a content expert to refer

to as needed. Some modules articulated to a National certificate IV . My role was to do the T.N.A., write modules, liaise with the consultants writing the modules, assess learners, coach learners and where necessary facilitate the modules.

6. A system was introduced whereby the supervisor had to engage with the learners to develop an action plan to implement the lessons learnt from a learning experience.
7. A matrix of mandatory and recommended learning for all levels of employees was developed.
8. The performance appraisal process put a high emphasis on learning with the result that individual learning plans were developed for all employees.
9. The organisation truly became a “Learning organisation” and a high value was put on learning.
10. A communications plan was developed to communicate learning processes to employees. Various available media were used to communicate learning change.
11. Development of the learning materials involved many project teams and a philosophy that “When initiating change, People support what they create” was used.
12. Assessors of the self-paced learning modules completed learning and set about assessing learners
13. was summed up for me when I was sitting in a mine manager’s office that overlooked the coal stockpile and the mine manager said” There was a time when I had evidence the bulldozer operators did not always know what they are doing and the machines were not always well maintained, since this new training I no longer have these concerns”

The precursors to success were the very thorough learning needs analysis and the establishment of the preferred and most effective means of learning.

The use of Power-Point presentations

There are 4 very common mistakes with the use of Power-Point presentations.

1. Stuffing far too much material on the presentation; the need to constantly display the company logo is particularly inappropriate in my view.
2. Font size too small for those at the back of the room to read it - particular problem with an older audience
3. An over-reliance on the technology; you should be prepared for a power failure or for some other reason an inability to use the technology.
4. Too many presentations - many presenters foster “Death by Power-Point” (too many or over reliance on them)

Tips for preparing presentations

- Keep them simple and visually strong
- Use keywords not sentences or phrases
- Bring it alive with colour and clip-art
- Make sure it says exactly what you mean
- Big font
- Use a sequence of presentations to build to a point you are making
- Use strong colours for font, black, dark blue, dark purple etc.
- Dark blue, dark green, dark red contrasted with a strong yellow background can be visually appealing.
- Some people get annoyed if you read to them what they can easily read for themselves on the screen

- Slow down your pace to allow sufficient time for your audience to read what is on the screen
- Always check your presentation can be read from the back of the room
- Incorporate as much multi-media into the presentation as possible, it is relatively easy to incorporate video into power-point
- The wise learning facilitator uses a wide range of learning methodologies

Tool box meetings

- Regular, short, sharp, tool-box meetings can be an excellent means of getting the safety message to employees and resolving safety problems.
- The following advice is given for the conduct of these meetings-
- Find a quiet area free of distractions
- Use open-ended questions to promote involvement, positively reinforce responses to questions and comments
- Remember the 7P rule-Prior Preparation and Planning Prevents P—s Poor Performance
- A bit of humour does not go astray
- Research your topic and generally be organised
- Audience interaction is always a good idea
- Avoid lecture style presentations wherever possible
- When you cannot answer questions raised find out and provide feedback to the group
- Have a set agenda and publish minutes, including to relevant noticeboards. The minutes record discussion and outline agreed actions
- Topics can include a review of incidents, observations on practice, safety alerts, legislative updates and safety initiatives
- A guest speaker or relevant audio-visual presentation can add variety
- Having a set time every month has advantages
- The OHS professional can be a guest presenter and source of relevant material
- The meetings can be general safety training, an explanation of a new safety initiative, a review of existing work procedures or a general safety motivation tool
- Duration is generally 15-30 minutes
- Thoughts are varied on whether the meeting should be strictly about safety, my view is that safety should be the dominant content
- Be wary of people “saving up” their safety concerns until the tool-box meeting. Encourage prompt reporting of all safety concerns
- Have an attendance sheet where participants sign off
- Thank people for their participation

For further information refer to the paper *Tool-box meetings* on ohschange.com.au

The use of humour

Humour can be used effectively in formal and informal presentations and in general interaction in business and non-business life.

Avoid humour that focuses on religion, politics, race, class, sex, age, physical appearance. To use any of these will run the risk of upsetting someone. I hear you asking what the hell else is there that I can use? The only safe butt of your humour is yourself!

Introduce the humour in the general flow of your conversation.

For a major presentation rehearse and listen to yourself on a tape recorder.
Like many things in life humour follows the 7 P rule-Prior Preparation and Planning Prevents Piss-Poor Performance.

Try to use humour that relates to things others see as an annoyance.

Quotations from famous people are often sources of humour, you can search these on the internet, Laurie Lawrence's web-site has a lot of quotations.

Stretching the truth is forgivable.

If you are a presenter who uses effective humour, presents well and has a relevant message you will be invited back.

For more information Google the topic and look at the paper *The use of humour* on ohschange.com.au

Safety Induction

At one start-up operation I developed a comprehensive safety induction program lasting 2 days and put about 300 people through the training over about a year. I used to feel very proud that they left the training very switched on about safety. The reality was within a few days of hitting the workplace they realised that my safety world I had spoken about was not reality, the safety culture of the organisation did not support my training. The very clear message is anyone seeking to introduce learning programs must do learning needs analysis first (refer to the paper *Safety Training Needs Analysis* on my web-site ohschange.com.au)

The big question is how long do you spend on induction training? I have not got a good answer but suggest it is different for permanent employees and contractors. In these days of standardised industry induction programs a lot of people will have received a substantial safety needle prior to arriving on your site. The contractors go from site to site and sit through inductions at many sites. The last thing you need for these contractors is a protracted induction program that covers unnecessary old ground. For these people site specific arrangements may be enough.

Avoid lecture style presentations where possible and use interactive approaches (Refer to the paper *Adult Learning Principles and Process* on ohschange.com.au). You have to appreciate you may not have a very positive audience particularly with contractors.

At the end of the day nothing beats learning needs analysis.

One experienced OHS professional expressed the view that inductions for contractors should not last more than a few hours and be a way for organisations to be able to take action against breaches / non-compliance. You cannot discipline people unless there is very clear evidence they know the rules.

Human Resources

Job interviews

Major tip

Recruitment & selection uses “**Past behaviour predicts future behaviour**” The idea is to give plenty of examples of where in the past you have **successfully done the sort of things that you will be required to do in the new job**. Say what you did, how you did it and what were the results.

The interview

An important tip for interviews is to project an image that you are highly interested in the job and that you are generally high energy in your approach.

Government jobs usually stick to questions based on the selection criteria. Generally I would go to the interview with 2 examples of how I had successfully implemented the things in each of the selection criteria.

Prior to an important job interview you should have a mock interview with friends.

It is a good idea to think about what some of the questions you are likely to be asked are and have a prepared answer in your head.

Towards the end of the interview you may be asked if you have any questions, have some prepared questions and do not take this lightly as it is an important part of the interview.

Arrive in plenty of time to get yourself organised.

Leave home in time to allow for a flat tyre or the bus being late.

Always make an effort to appear clean & smart.

If you smoke lay off the fags at least 30 minutes before the interview and / or use a breath freshener. If it is a no smoking site they may wonder how you will survive all day without a smoke.

It is a really good idea not to turn up for interview drunk (saw it happen once) or otherwise smelling of grog. Some interviewers, particularly women, have an acute sense of smell.

Speak professionally, do not swear or use slang.

Listen carefully to the questions being asked and make sure your replies do not go off on tangents.

If possible try to bring along a number of good examples of your previous work.

Always ask for confirmation of verbal arrangements with a letter or e-mail.

There will be times the interview does not “click” as far as communications and interpersonal issues go, there could be lots of reasons for this that have nothing to do with your abilities. Get specific instructions on how to find the place where the interview will be conducted, advice on parking may be appropriate.

Try to find out the names and positions of those who will interview you, helps you to pitch your responses at the right level.

A security blanket for many employers is experience in their industry. If you do not have experience in their industry put a bit of work showing how experience in your industry is relevant to theirs.

The person who will make or break a job for you will be your supervisor. He or she will probably be an interviewer, make sure you are happy with their communications and interpersonal skills.

A lot of employers realise that an interview, in isolation, may not give a good result and will ask you for a demonstration of your skills.

Employers will be impressed by enthusiasm, you cannot possibly know everything they will want you to know but if you demonstrate a keenness to learn that is a lot of the battle.

Like many things in life getting a job follows the 7 P rule (Prior Preparation and Planning Prevents Piss Poor Performance)

Once you have the interview it is always a good idea to ring and thank them for the interview, confirms your interest in the job, allows clarification of things unsure about and gives you a chance to expand on things you forgot to say at the interview.

A good general rule in life and particularly with job interviews is to avoid discussion on sex, religion and politics. If you do not know your audience discussion on these topics can be disastrous.

Sometimes people will say something controversial to see how you react.

For further information refer to *Job interviews* on ohschange.com.au

The resume

Major tip

Recruitment & selection uses “**Past behaviour predicts future behaviour**” The idea is to give plenty of examples of where in the past you have **successfully done the sort of things that you will be required to do in the new job**. Say what you did, how you did it and what were the results.

Very important

When you see a job advertised analyse the ad to identify the required competencies and write down a dot point list. In your response talk about your experience with those competencies, preferably with concrete examples. Even if not specifically asked for, always include something on your communications and interpersonal skills and your ability to work in a team.

Writing a resume

The first thing you have to do is identify your skills relevant to the type of employment you desire.

Give specific numbers and figures for your achievements. Show results.

Insert your personal details and contact information.

Put in your career objective, do not be too specific or you will limit your chances of getting the job that does not fit the bill exactly.

If you think it is appropriate put in an overview of your employment highlighting your major strengths and major achievements.

Briefly list the jobs you have had.

List your qualifications / affiliations.

List your skills-These may be technical skills relevant to the sort of jobs you want to apply for, written communications skills, oral communications skills, computer skills, leadership skills, put a lot of work into describing your interpersonal skills as employers see this as very important.

List all the jobs you have had in the last 10 years describing in some detail what you did and very importantly what your achievements were.

Carefully analyse the requirements of any position you apply for and tailor your resume to this.

As a general rule I would keep the resume to 3 or 4 pages for people who have been in the workforce for a number of years, do not make the job of reading it too hard for the potential employer.

Very important-Get someone to proof read what you have written.

The good books say you must tailor your resume to each job you apply for. Good job ads will specify what qualities the employer is looking for in applicants, in other words the selection criteria. With detailed selection criteria you should prepare a covering letter or response to selection criteria and say, with examples from your past work, how you meet the criteria. In these circumstances you may be able to get by with a generalised resume (still pays to go through the resume and make sure it meets the general criteria)

For further information see *Resumes* on ohschange.com.au

Conclusion

The above represents some of my learning with safety and safety aligned methods. I hope there has been some learning in it for you.

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