

## 8 key components of a successful safety management program:

### 1. Formalized safety policies

The first step to safety success is to outline the organization's safety policies – your organization's position on the importance of safety management, and the general expectations from each employee as to how to act in certain situations.

Safety policies should include critical operating information for employees to embrace and follow throughout their day to day working lives. These policies should include everything from general operating procedures such as: what to do in case of a fire, how often fire drills are practiced to detailed instructions for dealing with injuries if someone is hurt on the job or while in the building.

According to Safety experts having a written, shared, and embraced safety policy is the most basic requirement that shows an organization's commitment to safety.

**“NOT ONLY SHOULD THE POLICY BE WRITTEN, IT SHOULD BE ACTIVELY LIVED OUT EACH DAY. THAT INCLUDES CONSISTENT, PROACTIVE SAFETY AUDITS, SITE INSPECTIONS, HAZARD IDENTIFICATION, AND REGULAR INTERACTIONS TO ENSURE EMPLOYEES KNOW AND LIVE THE POLICY—AND THAT RISKS ARE DISCUSSED AND CORRECTED QUICKLY IN THE COMPANY EACH DAY.”**

### 2. Effective and regular communication about safety and health

Having safety policies that are frequently communicated and accessible to everyone is important. It's critical that organizations discuss the safety policies with employees and managers to ensure understanding and adoption.

It's also a good idea to remind employees often that safety takes priority over productivity. This message can sometimes get lost with the daily pressures of meeting order commitments. Employees sometimes feel that they get mixed messages, so be sure to remind employees of the priority of safety.

Focused, consistent messaging about safety and health can create loyal, productive, and accountable employees who feel respected and valued by the company. Regular, ongoing communication educates employees, helps to show the values of the company, and it helps to reinforce the right behaviors.

Make sure that employees feel a strong personal connection to their own safety and the safety of others – “shared accountability.” The benefits of this mutual caring by employees will be recognized instantly. You'll see that employees embrace safety policies rather than avoid them. As a result, you'll find a reduction in the frequency and severity of incidents and near-misses improving the overall effectiveness of your safety management program.

### **3. Support for behavior-based safety**

The safest companies in the world recognize the importance of creating habits around safety. That's why many of them focus on behavior-based safety – a safety methodology that focuses on improving safety through habit creation.

Unsafe behavior is naturally habitual for most employees and they are unaware of it. Oftentimes, an activity has been done the wrong way for so long that employees aren't even conscious of the incorrect behavior in many cases. Companies can create good behavior by forming positive habits while breaking old ones. That's where the concept of habit change comes into play.

According to behavioral expert, it takes 66 days on average to develop a new habit. That means that organizations must dedicate themselves to continuous improvement in order to achieve optimal safety results.

In order to create habit change, Clear uses a framework called the 3R's of Habit Change:

1. Reminder (the trigger that initiates the behavior)
2. Routine (the behavior itself; the action you take)
3. Reward (the benefit you gain from doing the behavior)

In your personal life, you might use a fitness tracker, set an alarm or leave notes on your bathroom mirror to remind yourself of things to help create healthy habits. You can use these same principles with your employees in the workplace, perform and record regularly near misses, behavior-based observations and/or spot checks.

#### **4. Utilization of both leading and lagging indicators**

Organizations with outstanding safety records develop a systematic method to measure what's going on throughout their entire safety operation. It enables them to quickly and easily understand why something went wrong if it ever does. However, most organizations are far from this type of systematic reporting capability.

Many organizations primarily utilize lagging indicators – a measure of what's happened in the past such as lost workdays, workers' comp costs, or injury frequency. As safety leaders know, these reactive metrics do very little for future prevention of accidents and injuries.

The ability to quickly and precisely identify high-risk situations is something that should be on every safety leader's checklist for safety performance. Leading indicators can provide insight so that the organization can predict what could happen and take action to avoid accidents from occurring. Leading indicators include measures such as frequency of safety training, number of and results of safety audits and inspections, as well as the behaviors reflecting operations including mean time of completion of corrective action, employee involvement in proactive activities and even leadership involvement.

Through gaining insights into leading and lagging indicators, organizations can gain a complete picture of all safety program activity, with the ultimate goal of preventing accidents before they ever happen.

Some anecdotal stories describe companies compiling data for days for their annual meetings. Investing in safety management software with customizable analytics can resolve the issue and give you time and money back.

## **5. Cutting edge tools and systems**

Companies with low injury rates equip their employees for success and they do so through more than just processes and safety management programs. They leverage cutting-edge tools and systems to keep their employees prepared and ready to handle whatever they need to.

The most impactful safety management program is one that equips any employee to quickly access the information they need and report an issue. Whether that information is an SDS Sheet, a training record, or the result of a safety audit, companies are now leveraging mobile safety management solutions to improve the timeliness of response and communication.

Just like companies provide their employees with PPE, the best safety leaders recognize the importance of mobile safety software to improve their overall safety management program. This is becoming even more important as younger workers who grew up as digital natives look for employers that accommodate working in ways that are natural and preferred for them. They can't imagine having to fill out a paper form, fax it to someone, keep a copy for their file, etc. They expect employers to use tools that they use in their daily life to ease their adoption of organizational operations.

## **6. Frequent safety training and discussion**

The safest companies in the world recognize the importance of continuous education of their employees, and they prioritize it.

According to OSHA, safety training provides managers, employees, and supervisors with:

1. Knowledge of proper practices to do their job safely
2. Awareness of how to eliminate hazards to reduce risk
3. Specialization when their specific roles require unique preparation

These three components are critical to reducing incident frequency while improving overall safety. One issue that employers face when looking to implement frequent training is that training sessions can be long and boring. When's the last time you remember seeing an employee get excited about a training session?

A public speaker and training expert has a solution to helping you keep training engaging, fun, and effective for all employees: keep your content high energy, and use storytelling to connect with people.

## **7. Empowered and motivated employees**

Empowering employees through your approach to safety management can result in tremendous outcomes for your organization. However, many organizations struggle to achieve the proper level of employee engagement.

“The biggest problem with most safety management programs is that they focus on preventing injuries by highlighting how bad things can get – scaring employees straight. While that’s somewhat effective, it does very little to motivate employees to perform better.” This results in a fear-based culture rather than one based on success, thus reducing employee morale.

Successful safety management programs and plans consistently promote proper safety through continuous education, consistent reinforcement, and ongoing improvements.

Interested in some ideas to improve engagement and empowerment? Try highlighting a safety person of the week/month – or nominate them to be a safety hero on.

## **8. Comfort with reporting issues related to safety**

It’s natural to want to get the job finished on schedule — or even ahead of time — but with a “get it done quick” attitude, accidents happen. Top tier organizations emphasize the importance of reporting potential problems before they occur, or reporting safety incidents the moment they happen.

Make sure employees understand that they shouldn't take shortcuts and that safety is the top priority. An accident impacts productivity more than anything in a business, so make sure that the correlation between safety and productivity is understood by all – especially those managers who are evaluated on productivity.

Employees should feel interested and obligated to report a hazard or potential issue when they see it. When everyone feels a sense of responsibility for carrying out safety policies and procedures, the entire organization will improve its safety.

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