

HEALTH AND SAFETY LEADERSHIP

A SHORT GUIDE TO ACHIEVING EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT

Health and safety management must be led by the Board and Senior Management if it is to be effective in protecting the health, safety and welfare of employees and the public. “Health and safety is integral to success. Board members who do not show leadership in this area are failing in their duty as directors and their moral duty, and are damaging their organisation.” Health and Safety Executive

Why is leadership from the top so important?

- Failure of the Board and Senior Management to identify health and safety as a key business risk could have catastrophic consequences for any organisation.
- The Board holds collective and individual responsibility (liability) for breaches of health and safety law.

Planning the direction for successful health and safety management

It is the responsibility of the Board to set the company's direction for achieving successful health and safety management. Key steps to achieving this require:

- Board members to devise a dynamic health and safety policy. This must act as an integral part of your organisation's culture by setting out the company's values and performance standards.
- Board members and senior management to ensure that duties and responsibilities for health and safety management are communicated throughout the organisation.
- Executive directors to develop policies which do not lead to the creation of future health and safety issues.

Monitoring health and safety

Monitoring health and safety performance plays a crucial role in the overall effectiveness of an organisation's management systems. Without this, Board members cannot receive accurate reports on health and safety performance. For this reason the Board should ensure that:

- Equal importance is allocated to reporting preventative data (training and maintenance programmes) and accident/incident data.
- Periodic audits of management structures and risk control measures are carried out by competent persons.
- Changes to procedures, processes and equipment, along with health and safety failings are swiftly reported to the Board.
- Procedures are implemented which ensure that relevant changes to health and safety legislation are communicated across the entire organisation at the earliest opportunity.

Reviewing health and safety

Reviewing the organisation's health and safety performance is crucial, as this allows the Board to identify whether the essential principles of health and safety management are embedded across the organisation. More importantly, it identifies whether your organisation's management system is effective in managing risks and also protecting employees and the public from harm. The review process should:

- Examine whether the health and safety policy reflects the organisation's values and targets.
- Examine whether risk control systems have reported sufficient and accurate levels of data to the Board.
- Report health and safety shortcomings and failures to the Board.

- Agree upon an action plan to address shortcomings through the implementation of effective control measures.

Delivering health and safety

Choosing the correct vehicle to ensure the effective delivery of health and safety across an organisation can be the difference between success and failure. For this reason, organisations should focus on introducing management systems which facilitate the delivery of risk management and risk reduction strategies.

Achieving effective delivery requires Board members to take ownership of health and safety management. In doing so, the Board must:

- Ensure health and safety arrangements are adequately resourced across the organisation.
- Obtain health and safety advice from competent persons.
- Ensure adequate risk assessments are carried out which address risks across the organisation's undertakings; adequate control measures must be devised which focus on eliminating or reducing risks to their lowest form.
- Involve employees and their representatives during the decision making process. This will make employees feel valued; encourage them to take ownership of health and safety, and thus, increase the likelihood of achieving overall compliance with policies and procedures.

Benefits associated with effective health and safety management

Effective health and safety management can offer any organisation, whether large or small, significant benefits and commercial opportunities. For example:

- Reduced risks
- Fewer accidents/incidents
- Reduced threat of legal action
- Reduced litigation costs
- Increased employee morale and productivity
- Enhanced corporate reputation among stakeholders, customers and communities.

Failing health and safety management

The following HSE statistics highlight the real human and financial costs associated with failing to provide effective health and safety management:

- “More than 200 people are killed at work in the UK each year. This does not include work-related road deaths.” (www.hse.gov.uk)
- “In 2006, 30 million working days were lost in the UK to occupational ill health and injury, imposing an annual cost to society of £30 billion.” (www.hse.gov.uk)
- High staff turnover
- Reduced productivity and quality
- High litigation costs
- Loss of reputation

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