

Moving From An Immature To a Robust Safety Management System

A very brief analysis has revealed company X has an immature S.M.S., the following suggestions are made for action over the next 12 months to commence the journey to developing a robust S.M.S. The suggestions given are proven basic techniques in OHS management. They will have to be modified and other issues added due to the uniqueness of your organisation and input from the stakeholders.

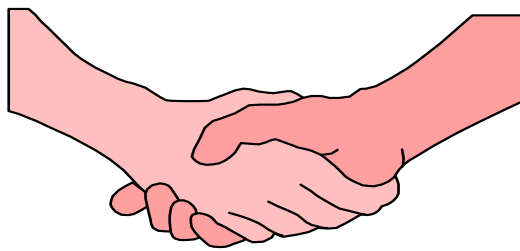
Quotable Quote

"A health & safety problem can be described by statistics but cannot be understood by statistics. It can only be understood by knowing and feeling the pain, anguish, and depression and shattered hopes of the victim and of wives, husbands, parents, children, grandparents and friends, and the hope, struggle and triumph of recovery and rehabilitation in a world often unsympathetic, ignorant, unfriendly and unsupportive, only those with close experience of life altering personal damage have this understanding"

Major Guiding Principle

INITIATING CHANGE

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



Other guiding principles

Use real world approaches not theory

All paperwork must be succinct

Whatever is done in OHS must be based on a needs analysis

Need to get some runs on the board quickly

Concentrate on the things that give you the biggest bang for your buck

Aim for simplicity not complexity

Minimise the bureaucracy and bull-shit

Face to face communications should be used wherever possible

Be guided in what you do by taxonomies of Class 1 damage in your industry

Some people can make pig poo look like strawberry jam with slick presentations and flowery words, it is essential to look past the gloss.

As the facilitator of the process I will use the skills of appropriate self-disclosure and reflective listening

Detailed suggestions

1 OHS Management Plan

The organisation must develop a detailed OHS management plan with goals, objectives and means of achieving the objectives. Widespread consultation is required in developing the plan, the plan must be regularly reviewed and updated. The plan needs time lines for the implementation of the various issues.

2 Sensing survey

The OHS professional needs to carry out a quick look around, talk to the people and examination of the paper trail at all locations to get a sense of the organisations OHS culture

3 Legislation compliance audit

If all you do in OHS is comply with legislation you will not have a robust Safety Management System, however compliance with sensible legislation is a basic starting point that organisations are judged by. An audit of compliance with legislation is mandatory early in the process. The effort required to comply with legislation must not be under-estimated. Training to overcome gaps will be a natural outcome of this process. Feedback to management is part of this process.

Once the compliance issues have been rectified it is time for a broader Safety Management Systems audit.

3 Force-Field Analysis

Force-field analysis (See following description) is a very useful tool to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of a S.M.S. and develop strategies to move forward. It is best to carry this out with a cross-section of stakeholders.

4 Presentations to management

Presentation to management and supervisors on their statutory obligations, obligations under common law, management commitment, safety leadership and what makes for a robust S.M.S. are vital.

5 Safety Committees

Organisations that are highly successful at OHS have a management OHS committee to work mainly on the strategic direction and mixed committees to work primarily on the operational direction of

OHS. If you are not careful the mixed committees develop into a whinge fest with issues that should be sorted out on a daily basis “saved” to the committee meeting. Giving the committee something substantive to achieve helps to overcome this. Committee reps and Health & Safety reps require training.

6 Health & Safety Rep.

The powers given the H& S reps under legislation are considerable and have been enhanced recently with the power to issue Provisional Improvement Notices given to reps. with the appropriate training. An effective system of reps can give very valuable assistance but it is rare in my experience to have such an effective system. Getting this to work requires some input, mainly from the OHS professional.

7 Monitoring and Reporting

Workers compensation claims cost and premium cost need attention. The costs of implementation of OHS measures are also of importance. Safety experience needs to be monitored and reported on using lag indicators (Accident experience) and leading indicators (Positive performance indicators)

8 Safety Meetings

Many studies have shown the power of meetings conducted by the supervisor. In my experience many organisations insist supervisors conduct a safety meeting for their crew monthly. Minutes are taken and issues raised resolved. Supervisors need a bit of guidance from the OHS professional in the conduct of these meetings.

9 Safe Working Procedures

S.W.P.'s need to be developed for at least the high risk tasks. The OHS professional can guide the supervisor in this.

10 Safety Training Needs Analysis

What ever safety training you decide to introduce must have a detailed needs analysis as a pre-cursor. Modern adult learning principles need to be incorporated in all training.

11 Risk Assessment

I believe there is an over-reliance on risk assessment techniques in OHS however the benefits of getting a group of people together to discuss an issue must be there. Carefully targeted risk assessment is recommended.

12 OHS Budget

Like all other aspect of business management has to manage OHS needs a budget.

13 Safety Induction

Most organisations have an induction of sorts, it is rare in my experience for the safety component to be particularly effective. The safety induction should be reviewed.

14 Name the S.M.S. Competition

Some organisations decide to promote a competition with their employees and their families to name the Safety Management System. With a modest prize and appropriate publicity this can generate a lot of interest in safety.

15 Safety Inspections

After a bit of basic training a designated worker can conduct regular inspections of their work area and report gaps to the supervisor. Rotating employees through this has its advantages.

. Force-Field Analysis

Force-field analysis(similar to S.W.O.T. analysis) is a simple, yet powerful technique, useful at the beginning of a project to define the nature of the beast you are dealing with. It is particularly useful when seeking to develop new Safety Management Systems.

A small group,6-8, stakeholders is required. Defining the scope of your deliberations is important-Put some boundaries around your discussions.

The process goes something like this-

1 Revise the brainstorming rules

BRAINSTORMING RULES

Say the first thing that pops into your mind

Do not be judgemental of your or others ideas

The wilder the idea the better the idea

Do not be constrained by convention

Think out of the square

Quantity not necessarily quality

Every person and every idea has equal worth

Build on the ideas put forward by others

Sometimes you may wish to have a fun exercise to practice the brainstorming technique to start with. One exercise I did had a number of OHS professionals one of whom ran a take-away shop as an extra business. We brainstormed how to increase the sales of fish & chips at "Buck's Greasy Spoon" (That was the name the group came up with for the take-away shop, the owner took this in his stride) One of your members may have a hobby or activity they are trying to improve and you can brainstorm how to help them improve. Main thing is light-hearted & not too serious.

2 Brainstorm an objective for the Safety Management System The objective may be zero permanently disabling injuries, may reflect a number of positive performance measures, may include financial measures and so on. Caution is urged in using measures such as the Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate.

3 Brainstorm the promoting / facilitating forces acting towards the objective

4 Brainstorm the constraining / restraining forces acting against the objective

5 Develop an action plan to boost the facilitating / promoting forces and negate the constraining / restraining forces.

Discussion needs to be recorded on butchers paper, on a recording whiteboard or on the fly with a laptop & data projector. One of the outcomes of the above discussion is that you will define a number of the things you are already doing in safety, in itself, not a bad thing to do.