OSHAssociation UK

Occupational Safety and Health Training

International Professional Certificate in Occupational Safety and Health

COURSE 104 GUIDE

HEALTH & SAFETY CULTURE

Course 104 Guide

Health and Safety Culture

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Course 104 Guide

The Benefits of an Effective Health and Safety Culture

Health and safety is seen by some as a business, but this view is far from the truth. If you were to talk to organisations that have been prosecuted for a serious accident, who had to pay compensation for personal injury or who have seen a sharp rise in insurance premiums because of damage to a building, they would say that their failure to protect the health and safety of their employment has resulted in personal loss and pain, financial loss, damage to property or all these consequences.

The benefits of a good health and safety system are the best reasons for adopting a strong health and safety culture in an organisation.

Key Words and Phrases

Health and safety culture – the integration of health and safety awareness and Controls into day-to –day workplace Practices. Also the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours regarding health and safety within an organisation.

Performance indicators – measurements used to help an organisation to define and measure progress towards the organisation's health and safety goals.

What is a Health and Safety Culture?

A workplace culture can be characterised as being 'the way we do things here'. It is made up of things such as personal and ` values – what is considered important – ethics, attitudes, levels of competence and ways of behaving.

A good health and safety culture exists in an organisation where health and safety awareness and controls are integrated into day - to - day organisational management practices. It is characterised by positive attitudes, positive beliefs and positive behaviours as regards to health and safety at work.

Organisations plan for a positive health and safety culture. They encourage changes that improve health and safety procedures. They involve staff and management through consultation and communication, problems are discussed thoroughly and a solution is sought with everyone's agreement.

Benefits

The benefits to an organisation of a good health and safety culture are:

- Reduced employment absence
- Better recruitment and retention
- Reduced insurance, damage and compensation costs
- Safe reputation
- Better productivity and efficiency.

Sick Leave/Absence

Sick leave is costly for most organisations. If the absences are due to illness or accidents caused by work, then the time lost and extra costs caused can be controlled by adopting better health and safety standards: in short, the business could save a lot of money.

Improving health and safety measures at work reduces the likelihood that people will need sick leave in the first place. Bringing them back to work sooner means les disruption in the long run.

By reducing the number of employees on sick leave, business can save money spent on the salary of the absent employee, overtime for other employees covering for the absent employees, the productivity losses incurred by the absent employee and the cost of hiring temporary cover.

It may also reduce the loss in productivity when a replacement employee or contractor needs time to learn the job of the absentee. It may also help to maintain good customer relations because clienteles have consistent employee contact. Reduced absence will also avoid unnecessary recruitment and training costs.

Recruitment and Retention

Businesses with low employee turnover due to workplace illnesses or accidents avoid the costs of regularly finding new members of staff. Costs include advertising, the time spent interviewing candidates, temporary work placement and, possibly, additional training costs. There may also be costs from reducing productivity as a new staff member who does not have the required skills for the job is employed. A positive health and safety culture will help to create better employee morale and motivation.

Insurance, Damage and Compensation

It is necessary for employers to take out employer liability insurance to cover injuries and ill health of employees while at work. Even so, insurance policies cover only a small proportion of the real cost of accidents and ill health.

It is worth bearing in mind that the cost of insurance premium can increase because of a poor health and safety record, so investment in good health and safety systems and practices will eventually save money.

Reputation

Many organisations have established a positive reputation that has boosted profits. Accidents can destroy that reputation very quickly. Recovery of a reputation can take a long time and some organisations never recover. It comes back to the principle that prevention is better than cure.

It is not only public reputation that is important. The reputation of the organisation before its employees is also very important. High morale and strong motivation among employees is also good for business. Implementing a good health and safety system will prevent accidents and ill health at work; create a positive culture in the organisation and save time and money.

Productivity and Efficiency

A healthy workforce with an enhanced sense of well- being can lead to good productivity and efficiency in the organisation, In contrast, sickness absence, long-illness and work- related accidents and incidents have negative impacts on a business, leading to reduced productivity and profits.

A good health and safety culture can lead to better productivity from greater attendance at work, less down- time and fewer lost working days. Employees appreciate good working conditions and this could also lead to increased productivity and profitability.

How Much Does It Cost?

Some companies have quantified the benefits of a positive health and safety culture. One saved £11 million through reduced sickness absence. Another was a 40 percent reduction in reportable injuries. Other examples include:

a reduction in the cost of health insurance by £200,000 a year.

Achieving a Good Health and Safety Culture

There are a number of stages to follow while moving towards a positive health and safety culture. Managers need to assess the organisation's health and safety systems and identify where improvements need to be made. The assessment should be based upon all sources of information in the workplace- including supervisors, safety representatives and employees.
The next step is to find out health and safety procedures, work practices and other health and safety information that is distributed and communicated within the workplace.

It is then important to find out the workers' levels of understanding of the organisation's health and safety policies and procedures.

Once these facts are known, managers can plan improvements and find the necessary resources. The plans should include suitable performance indicators and the dates for reviewing the plans to see if they are working.

Good communication about the plans are crucial to their success. The information needs to be given clearly and concisely to all the relevant people. Some will be specific to supervisors, safety representatives of employees' safety and it should be given at an appropriate time, level and place for the target group.

Maintaining the culture change can be done through regular communication about health and safety issues and encouraging ideas on good practices, possibly through a safety committee.

Examples of an Effective Health and Safety Culture

- The managing director, chief executive or individual director of the organisation must show that he or she is serious about health and safety.
- Managers are clear about what to do and show their commitment by, for example, attending safety committee meetings regularly.
- Employees are involved in health and safety monitoring and are consulted about decisions on changes to health and safety procedures.
- There is good communication and everyone knows the aims for health and safety- for example, there are regular newsletter items about health and safety issues and the health and safety performance indicators are displayed on the notice board (such as the number of accidents or incidents recorded or the number of people training in a particular period).
- There is a positive attitude to training and people are receptive to change.
- People talk about health and safety issues openly and positively. They question procedures and are sensible and understanding about how things can be improved.

The Value of Health and Safety Policies

Health and safety policies are the main guiding principles for the organisation and control of health and safety at work.

A policy includes the organisation's basic aims, objectives and arrangements for health and safety, the procedures to be followed and the standards to be achieved.

Key Words and Phrases

Health and safety culture – the integration of health and safety awareness and controls into day-to-day work practices. Also the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours towards health and safety within the organisation.

Health and safety policy – a written statement of the organisation's arrangements for and implementation of its health and safety management system and activities.

Hierarchyofcontrol- a well-tested system of graded health and safety controls.

What is a Health and Safety Policy?

A policy is the principle behind an action. A health and safety policy is a written statement of a company's general principles for the health and safety of employees at work. The policy also usually includes the organisational structure and the arrangements for carrying out the policy, including the communication of the policy to employees. In the UK, employers with five or more employees must, by law, prepare and record a health and safety policy. It is good practice for *all* employers to prepare a health and safety policy, even if they have fewer than five employees.

The policy should be revealed from time to time and the revisions brought to the attention of the employees.

The policy should describe the activities of the organisation, the resources provided for health and safety, the health and safety management systems and the products and services involved in the organisation.

The Benefits of a Health and Safety Policy

The advantages of having a health and safety policy include:

- Recognising that a positive health and safety culture is important if the company is to achieve adequate control of workplace risks
- Making sure that there is a systematic process for identifying risks
- Aiming at continual improvements in health and safety standards
- Recognising that accidents and ill health can result from bad management control and are not just the fault of employees
- Helping to minimize financial losses from accidents and ill health
- Helping to retain an exemplary record of good practice, without prosecutions or damaging publicity.

The development of a health and safety policy can help an organisation to focus on health and safety by systematically identifying the hazards and risks in its workplace, introducing controls and setting up monitoring procedures. In turn, this can assist employees to continue to improve health and safety standards.

Organisations that have well developed and 'living' health and safety policies are usually successful in achieving high standards of health and safety in the workplace. A 'living' policy is one that is part of the main management systems of the organisation and which corresponds to a realistic view of the organisation, not an idealistic one. It is integral to the day-to-day operations of the organisation and is monitored regularly.

In addition to helping employers to comply with legislation, a health and safety policy also helps to create a health and safety culture that satisfies employees, customers and shareholders. It may also reduce personal and financial losses.

Health and Safety Policy Statement

To be effective, health and safety policies should be integrated into the organisation's general management systems. Policies vary, but they are generally structured along the lines described in the rest of this course.

Statement of Intent

Among other elements, the statement of intent should:

- Give a commitment to comply with health and safety laws
- State the objectives of the policy-for example, a target for reducing the number o f accidents in the workplace
- Explain how the policy can contribute to the reduction of accidents and ill health in the workplace, and which impact this could have on business performance.
- State that the hazards in the workplace must be eliminated or controlled and the risk they present must be minimized
- Show how health and safety and other business objectives relate to each other
- State that the aim is continually to improve health and safety standards in line with relevant good practice and not merely with the legal minimum.
- Name a senior manager as the person who is responsible for health and safety in the workplace
- Commit financial and personnel resources to health and safety for protective and precautionary measures
- Commit the company to planning, reviewing and developing the health and safety policy.

The policy must be signed and declared by a director or owner of the organisation. This is intended to show that the organisation is committed to health and safety matters. There should be a review at regular intervals – for example, every two to three years, and other changes in the organisational structure, work arrangements or processes and after any serious incident

Organisation

Employers should set up a system to deal with health and safety matters. This usually involves a personnel structure designed to ensure the continual improvement of health and safety standards. The people designated implement the employer's decisions on health and safety policy and practice. It is important to name the post held by staff who are responsible for particular parts of the policy and its operation.

It is important for a senior manager to be named as the person with overall responsibility for health and safety in the workplace. He or she should also demonstrate commitment towards, and leadership in, health and safety by getting involved in the organisation of health and safety matters and by encouraging employees to have a positive attitude to working safely. Clear procedures and practices can be established by setting up a documented health and safety management system.

In large organisations, safety officers/advisers should be appointed. Training programmes should be put in place to ensure that all who have a responsibility for health and safety are competent to do the job they have been given.

The participation and co-operation of employees, safety representatives, and representatives of employees' safety, supervisors, managers and directors is necessary for the policy to work. All employees should be encouraged to participate in the health and safety management system. The people involved in the organisation of health and safety should be given clear responsibilities and there should be effective communication between employees, supervisors and managers. Safety and employees representatives should be recognised and safety committees set up, as appropriate.

The communication arrangements should include providing information and training for the workers in health and safety relevant to their work, and there should be procedures for receiving, recording and responding to all communications.

Arrangements

Employers must also make arrangements for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of the preventive and protective measures in health and safety at work. The arrangements must take into account the nature and size of the activities and must be put into practice. The procedures and practices included in the policy must be designed to protect the health and safety of all people in the organisation by preventing work related injuries, ill health, diseases and dangerous incidents.

This part of the policy states the practical measures for putting into practice the health and safety policy in the workplace. Risk assessment procedures should identify the hazards and risks in work activities that need to be controlled. The policy should also contain the measures to manage change in the organisation, deal with emergencies, arrange for contractors and buy services for health and safety purposes.

Priority should be given to those hazards and risks which are the most serious and harmful. It should also include the approach to such things as:

- Accident recording and reporting
- The control of hazardous substances
- Drugs and alcohol
- Fire safety and the control of flammable substances
- First aid
- Health surveillance
- Ionizing and non-ionizing radiation
- Lifting equipment and operations
- Manual handling
- Monitoring and inspection of the workplace
- Noise and vibration
- Personal protective equipment

- Pressure system
- Risk assessment
- Slips and trips
- Stress
- Training
- Work equipment
- Work at heights
- Workplace standards in electrical safety, gas safety and welfare facilities
- Workplace transport
- Work-related upper limb disorders.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, employers with five or more employees must have a written safety policy, which must be brought to the attention of employees. The policy should describe the activities of the organisation, the resources provided for health and safety, the health and safety management systems and the products and services involved in the organisation.

The Worth of Producing Health and Safety Reports

It is considered to be good practice to produce an annual commentary about health and safety matters. This is usually included in a company's annual report to shareholders. Some companies without shareholders also produce a similar document.

Even so, a study of 250 companies with more than 250 employees each found that only 26 per cent of them reported on health and safety. The study suggested that there was a scope for improvement in the type and breadth of health and safety issues reported, particularly performance and target-related issues.

Key Words and Phrases

Health and safety policy- a written statement of an organisation's general policy about its employees' health and safety at work, together with information about the organisational structure and arrangements for carrying out that policy.

Performance indicators – measurements used to help an organisation to define and measure progress towards the organisation's health and safety goals.

Why Include Health and Safety in an Annual Report?

Organisations try to show good corporate 'social responsibility' – they consider the interests of employees and customers by taking responsibility for the impact of their activities. The production of an annual report forms part of this. The perceived benefits include the following examples.

- The report brings together key information which can be used by boards of directors to consider strategic health and safety issues
- It helps to encourage shareholders to support improvements in health and safety
- It enhances the organisation's public image
- It might help to enhance long-term company stability and sustainability by avoiding the costs involved in accidents and ill health
- It demonstrates the organisation's commitment to health and safety and shows good practices

What should Annual Information include?

A good report about health and safety is likely to contain the following elements.

- The health and safety policy
- The arrangements and the organisational structure for health and safety – for example, board-level responsibilities and the board's relationship with a safety committee.
- Any national or international health and safety standards the company has adopted – for example, B58800 2004 (dealing with occupational health and safety management systems).
- The health and safety aims of the organisation.
- The health and safety risks in the organisation determined by the risk assessments carried out.
- The main hazards in the company, risk assessment arrangements and control measures used.
- Health and safety audit arrangements.
- Arrangements for a worker's recovery after a work-based accident or illness.
- Worker involvement in the health and safety process.
- The structure of safety committee(s).
- Training provided.
- The causes of serious accidents and incidents and actions to be taken to prevent them from recurring.
- The health and safety performance of contractors.
- Risks from travel outside the workplace.
- Organisational progress, as measured against the health and safety aims and objectives – see 'performance indicators' below.
- How health and safety affects the business, whether positive or negative.

Performance Indicators

Performance indicators are defined standards, limits and intermediate goals that are established to help an organisation to define and measure its progress towards the organisation's health and safety aims. In other words, the performance indicators help an organisation to check how well it is doing.

Examples of performance indicators that could be included in an annual report include the following:

- Accidents, incidents, ill health and sick leave/absence analysed under the heading of fatalities, major injuries, and total days lost – expressed per 100 workers, for instance – and those involving customers or members of the public.
- Management commitment, such as attendance to safety committees.
- Average number of health and safety training/refresher/development days per employee.
- Worker involvement, such as number of consultations.
- Risk assessment completed.
- Inspection and audits completed against target.
- Emergency response drills and exercises completed.
- Number of new occupational health cases.
- Costs associated with accidents and ill health.
- Number of enforcement notices received by the company.

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Commentary on the Statistics

The statistics relating to performance can be meaningless without some explanation, so it is good practice to comment on them. The detail depends on the size of the organisation. The statistics could, for example, be compared with national targets and long-term trends in the organisation.

The report should also identify the priorities for improving health and safety management performance targets over the coming years.

Revision Question

Do the following Quiz to evaluate your performance of study and review with your course tutor.

Good starting for you:-)

1. Give three (3) main reasons why we should create an effective health and safety culture at a workplace?

2. Give two (2) strong reasons why health and safety should be included in an annual report?

3. Explain the term “performance indicators” and give 2 examples

4. What are the key factors to consider when setting up a health and safety policy for an organisation?