



Creating a Culture of Safety in Your Organization - Part 2: Employee Engagement

Developing and enhancing a strong and successful safety culture has many benefits to an organization. In Part 1 of this series, we focused on the role of Leadership in creating a culture of safety within an organization. Equally important is employee engagement.

BENEFITS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

In conjunction with effective safety leadership, employee engagement is the other key component of a safety culture. Without active participation by all members of an organization, a safety culture will not evolve and the safety management system will not reach its full potential. The benefits of active employee participation are:

- Employees who do the work know the most about the risks involved and how to make the work safer.
- Employees who feel valued when their ideas and suggestions are requested and taken seriously are more responsible and committed to company success.
- Employees will support and use processes, policies and programs because they have been involved in forming them.
- Employees have a personal interest in recognizing hazards and reporting them.

9 WAYS TO INVOLVE EMPLOYEES IN SAFETY

Every employee should be encouraged to take ownership of their personal safety as well as the shared

responsibility of the safety of others. Ideas for this include:

1. Suggestion box: With minimal effort, creating an anonymous space for employees to request change will help give them a voice and will relieve them of any whistleblower fears in speaking up. Your organization may also choose to implement an online form that accomplishes this task, especially if you have a number of offices or remote employees. Communication on actions taken or explanation if no action is critical to the success of the program.
2. Forums: Bringing together employees from different departments and/or locations to discuss safety topics will give employees a fresh perspective on their workplace while also creating a stronger sense of community across your organization.
3. Committees: Create safety committees to improve your workplace and empower your employees to choose a committee. These can include work groups such as ergonomics, off-the-job safety, wellness and orientation/training. It is vitally important that the committees work on priority safety issues and are able to track the changes they are responsible for.
4. Surveys: To gauge where employees stand on an issue, you can easily implement a short multiple-choice survey to benchmark employee perception. You can also include a brief comment area to capture any related thoughts that were not part of the survey. By taking the time to administer this survey and then sharing the results shortly after, employees will feel that you value their input. The next step is an action plan based on your findings.



5. Stand down: A stand down is a shutdown of work, taking place after a major incident occurs with the goal of assessing the situation companywide. But even before an incident occurs, your organization can adopt this process to demonstrate how seriously your company takes safety, to teach employees how to address hazards and incidents and also to start a dialogue with your employees about safety. Set aside sufficient time where all work stops at your organization in order to dedicate this time to safety education.
6. Safety drills: While drills are a key element in compliance, they also demonstrate how important it is for employees to work as a team and how 100% participation is absolutely necessary in an emergency and a safety management system.
7. Hazard and incident reporting: Smart leaders know it's best to set up a reporting culture, making it the job of all employees to actively seek out hazards in the workplace, with confidence that action will be taken and reported back to employees.
8. Safety talks: At meetings, begin with a short safety talk. Come up with timely and creative safety topics or even reiterate important reminders about off-the-job safety issues such as cooking safety, child restraint in cars or prescription drug safety.
9. Safety projects: Engage your employees with safety activities that can benefit the organization and their communities. Encourage employees to come up with something personally significant to them. This might be the distribution of hand sanitizer with a handout about proper food handling and tips on limiting the spread of germs. Another idea could be setting up a team to check the tire pressure of employees' vehicles. Get creative and share your projects throughout your organization.

principles about safety. These principles should be in the form of organization wide policies and practices. Leadership should share the accountability and success of the program by getting employees involved in improving and maintaining the safety culture.

CONCLUSION

Successful safety leaders can support a continuously improving, effective safety culture by ensuring that workers understand what their safety responsibilities are. This starts with leadership commitment to safety that reflects their beliefs, attitudes, values and

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