BUILDING A SAFE WORKPLACE TOGETHER

INTRODUCTION

As we enter into 2013, businesses, safety professionals and workers should reflect on the safety achievements we have been involved with over the last 12 months. How have we made our workplace safer? What *other* opportunities lay ahead? The January 2013 Edition of *Building a Safe Workplace Together* looks why businesses should set OHS targets; whilst also identifying mechanisms to ensure that these targets can be achieved. We trust this edition provides you with some tools that will support your business to establish and maintain more explicit safety behaviours.

The next issue of *Building a Safe Workplace Together* will be released in May 2013.

OVERVIEW

- What have we been up to lately?
- What's New? *Online Ergonomics (Safe Workstation Setup) Module*
- What is your businesses OHS Strategic Plan
- TRAINING: Blocked vs. random practice
- WARNING: Do Off-the-shelf OHS Manuals present compliance risks?
- OHS harmonisation update

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO LATELY?

Action OHS Consulting continues to work closely with our clients to build a safer workplace together. Some exciting projects we have undertaken since our last newsletter include:

- Commissioning clients onto our web-based OHS software. This allow everyone instant access to OHS information and reporting. What does this mean? It allows businesses to make informed decisions using current information. It is pleasing to see clients win the compliance battle. Please do not hesitate to contact us to better understand how **web-based OHS Management Software** can improve your business operations. Alternatively, view the OHS Software page on our website.

- Finalisation of the **Job Dictionary** project. This project represented an innovative way of managing the workplace OHS program. After Action OHS Consulting measured and reported on the physical and postural demands associated with different work tasks, our client has been in a position to work with internal stakeholders to: work through key hazardous manual task risks and hazards that impact their workers; provide hazard based training is relevant and specific to the roles of worker; and, update their Health and Wellbeing Program to be more relevant to inherent requirements/risks of their workplace.

- Development and commissioning of an **OHS Gap Analysis Audit Tool**. Clients are now provided with a snapshot of how effectively their OHS Management System is implemented with reference to a selection of operational hazards and *AS4801: Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems*.

- Along with the above work, Action OHS Consulting continues to support clients across a number of programs including OHS training, workplace ergonomics and occupational hygiene. For more details on our service offering, please follow the link to the Action OHS Consulting website.

WHAT'S NEW? Online Ergonomics (Safe Workstation Setup) Module

Action OHS Consulting is extending our workstation setup service offering. We are currently finalising an **online training module** that will support you to proactively manage computer operation hazard exposure by ensuring that your workers who sit at a computer understand what safe workstation setup looks like. The **online training module** has inbuilt prompts to support your workers identify and understand their individual workstation setup requirements.

Many organisations we work with are very good at resolving the workstation issue once the employee has advised them of their discomfort or injury – let this module be your opportunity to be proactive! From a compliance front, this module will capture those who have completed the training, and flag their competency.

Designed to include your corporate logo, safety vision and colours; the online module will come with a working Workstation Ergonomics Procedure, to ensure it fits your business needs.

Should you wish to register your interest in this innovative module, contact us at the following email address: info@actionohs.com.au.

WHAT IS YOUR OHS STRATEGIC PLAN?

Take a moment to consider....

> *Does your workplace have OHS targets?*
> *Does your workplace have an OHS plan?*
> *If established, are these reviewed, evaluated and redefined (as necessary) periodically?*
> ***"A target without a plan is just a wish..."***

When we take time to consider the statements above, everyone we speak with comes to the realisation that to achieve and get to the place we want to, it requires careful and well-thought out planning.

Why then do many workplaces continue to leave their OHS program in "the hands of the Gods"?

Regulators, consultants, academics and businesses that we work with all understand and agree that for a workplace to have a positive safety culture; the culture needs to be identified, endorsed, and then steered by the actions and decisions made at the senior management level of the business.

The role of the senior manager is to ensure that internally defined business performance targets are achieved. These will often include operational and financial measures. Understandably, if either of these two measures is not achieved – the existence of the business will be in question. For OHS to get cut-through in your business – it is at this level where some OHS performance targets must sit.

If your workplace does not have OHS performance targets, how do you know your workplace is performing well? What stimulates your Senior Managers to lead safety?

If the positive due diligence requirements outlined within the harmonised legislation has stimulated your workplace to be "active" in the OHS space; has this work been planned, or is it ad-hoc? How is the effectiveness of this work measured? How will you ensure OHS continues to have a place and be relevant in 5, 10, 15-years once the "hype" subsides?

We are aware of workplaces that have the belief that they were managing their OHS duty by having a Health and Safety Representative (HSR), or a dedicated OHS employee outside of this Senior Management level. Operationally, this may support OHS compliance actions to be completed; however, it will not result in OHS being a key pillar in your business' decision making. The impact on employee and customer safety needs to be explicitly considered, in tandem with all business decisions that are made. Therefore, inexcusably, OHS must be owned at the Senior Management level of your workplace.

OHS performance should be a standing agenda item in line with Finance and Operational Performance, in senior management and board level meetings. This means your workplace will need to identify OHS targets to measure and review performance. As with Operational and Financial performance, OHS performance can be measured using lead (positive) or lag (negative) performance targets.

What are lead performance indicators (targets)? Lead indicators measure the actions your business takes to improve OHS performance. Examples include: percentage of workers inducted within a defined period of time from commencement; and/or, the percentage of audits, inspections, meetings competed within a proposed timeframe.

Lead performance indicators can provide an outline of how OHS is implemented into your business.

What are lag performance indications (targets)?

Lag performance indicators report on outcomes, what has occurred. A classic example is LTIFR (Lost Time Injury Frequency). When looking to identify indicators, don't be afraid to include ones with a financial twist such as workers compensation premium. Not only will you be speaking the language of senior management and attaching a cost to OHS, safer workplaces and effective RTW practices should see this spend reduced.

Once your business has established OHS targets, it is important to remember that "a target without a plan is just a wish". A Safety Action Plan is an important tool, to define how these OHS targets will be achieved.

What will a structured OHS program provide?

Successful implementation of your OHS Management System and OHS Plan into business operations will improve the safety and workplace behaviours of your people, customers and visitors. It will also support management to demonstrate positive due diligence.

Getting started...

O   Ensure Senior Managers are aware of their legislated OHS duties and due diligence obligations.

O   Establish stakeholders to define OHS Targets – and concurrently consider OHS Action Plan. OHS Targets should be aligned to your OHS Policy and be:

  o   S – Specific; M – Measureable; A – Achievable; R – Realistic; T – Time-framed.

O   Once established, define OHS Action Plan. Outline timeframes and attach responsibilities.

O   Communicate OHS Targets to workplace.

O   Periodically review OHS Targets and OHS Action Plan.

Should you require any support, do not hesitate to contact us.

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TRAINING: BLOCKED Vs. RANDOM PRACTICE

Training is critical for all organisations to ensure that workers have the appropriate knowledge and skill to competently complete the inherent requirements of their role safely.

What training looks like varies considerably and will often depend on the training requirement. We often ask the question to our clients "what consideration did you make when developing the training program in your workplace?". Often, the answer is limited. In this edition of *Building a Safe Workplace Together* we take a look at blocked practice versus random practice.

In a sporting context, everyone has been exposed to blocked and random practice. When training to execute a skill, can you remember if it was better to act out Scenario A 10 times, before moving onto Scenario B, and then onto Scenario C (this is referred to as blocked practice); or, was it better to act out Scenario A once, Scenario B once and Scenario C once and repeat this 10 times (this is referred to as random practice)? The answer is dependent on whether you were assessing the performance in the training, or the performance at a later date.

Blocked practice should produce better performance than random practice during the initial rehearsal/training. Blocked practice is an effective way for the participant to "understand" the components of the individual skill. Once this skill is understood, it is random practice that facilitates the participant's ability to retain the skill. Why? Because the participant is required to fully focus on the skill and replay the entire motor pattern. Blocked practice sees the participant make small adjustments to the motor pattern, in line with how they executed the skill on the last occasion.

When designing effective training consider:

O The knowledge of the participants.
  o If the task is new for the worker, you may want to schedule training activities to transition from a blocked to a random approach when developing the training materials.
  o If it is re-training, you may want to schedule all training activities in line with random practice.

O How your competency assessments are structured? If the operator can continue to attempt until they pass, does this demonstrate competency? Or does this demonstrate that they have an ability to use the feedback provided from the knowledge of the last result?

O What do their work tasks look like? If their work requires constant variation in the task; random practice is likely to be more effective.

Can you continue to support learning by moving away from a blocked approach to a more randomised approach? *Whilst challenging for your participants initially – it will improve their skills in the future.*

WARNING: DO OFF-THE-SHELF OHS MANUALS PRESENT COMPLIANCE RISKS?

While easily accessible, generic documents may seem an easy and simple approach to achieve OHS compliance; the requirement to genuinely consult with workers is missing in off-the-shelf OHS systems, or OHS forms (e.g. OHS Policy, SWMS, etc.).

Remember: The Work Health Safety Act requires consultation between staff and management. Therefore, purchasing generic OHS documents online is not sufficient.

Not sure where you stand? Contact us.

OHS HARMONISATION UPDATE

As of 1 January 2013, South Australia and Tasmania joined New South Wales, Queensland, ACT, Northern Territory and the Commonwealth in adopting the harmonised Work Health and Safety Legislation.

The South Australian Work Health and Safety Act is similar to the model laws, however it contains the following key amendments:

• clarification that a person must eliminate or minimise risks to health and safety, so far as is reasonably practicable, "to the extent that they have the capacity to influence and control the matter";

• clarification that volunteer officers in mixed residential/commercial strata/community titles corporations will not be liable for a breach of officer duties under the Act;

• an increased number of training days for HSRs to 5 in the 1st year, 3 in the 2nd year and 2 in the 3rd year;

• it reinstates the right to silence;

• it contains certain policies and procedures relevant to when permit holders seek to exercise their right of entry about suspected breaches of the Act;

• it requires multiple stakeholders to be consulted before a model Code of Practice is approved.

Western Australia and Victoria remain the only States yet to adopt the model harmonised laws.

If you would like assistance in understanding the operational approach that your business should take in light of the harmonised legislation, please contact us.

Our next newsletter will be released May 2013. Is there anything that you would like to see in our newsletter? Contact us at info@actionohs.com.au and we will try our best to accommodate your requests.

JANUARY 2013 3